

MANY DAYS IN MOROCCO

*Five hundred copies of this book
have been printed. This is No.*



THE MEDERSA, SALLEE

MANY DAYS
IN *CHI*
MOROCCO

BY
JOHN HORNE

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PREFACE

APREFACE is supposed to explain briefly to the reader the purpose of the pages that follow it. With regard to these sketches, such explanation is easy. In writing them I have attempted to describe some of the beautiful and interesting things that await the traveller to Morocco, adding to my own impressions the background of history, the shadow of legend, and the high light of illustration.

In the quest for information I have tapped many sources. Among those from whose works I have quoted, and whose knowledge has been the means of smoothing the stony places, I desire to thank M. Alfred Bel, Director of the Medersa of Tlemcen, Algeria ; M. Prosper Ricard, Inspector of Native Art and Conservator of the Museum of F'ez ; and Dr. Edward Westermarck, the well-known writer on Moroccan marriage ceremonies and superstitions.

To M. Tranchant de Lunel, until lately Director of the Department of Fine Arts and Historical Monuments in Morocco, I owe a special debt of gratitude. Not only did he act as guide and mentor with unfailing judgment and artistic sense, but without his aid I should never have been able to wander through the maze of the Dar El Makhzen at Fez, nor to spend many days in the fascinating courtyards of the medersas. A true lover of Morocco, he has done much to save its past, and to send it down, strengthened but unchanged, to a more careful future.

But this is not only a preface of explanation and of thanks. It is

PREFACE

also the expression of a hope. Writing of mosques has made me wonder if the day will ever come when a mosque will be counted among the monuments of London. The thought may not have occurred to many people, but in reality it is a very natural one. London is the capital of the British Empire, which counts many millions of Mohammedans among its subjects. Yet it possesses no mosque. A very small one exists at Woking, but Woking is not London, and is too distant for regular worshippers living there. Across the Channel the problem has been solved in a manner clearly indicating the attitude of France. Not only is a mosque being built in Paris, but the French State has made a gift of the site to its Moslem subjects. Though it is obviously not within the obligations of the British Government to aid any religious community outside the Church of England, it is none the less certain that official help, in whatsoever form, towards the attainment of the great desire of London's Mohammedan citizens, would be appreciated, not by them alone, but by millions of their co-religionists throughout the world.

Should that desire ever be attained, then perhaps the builders of the world's westernmost mosque may turn to the western outpost of their faith for inspiration, and the architectural treasures of Morocco may serve a new and glorious purpose their builders never dreamed of.

JOHN HORNE.

AROSA, SWITZERLAND,

January, 1925.

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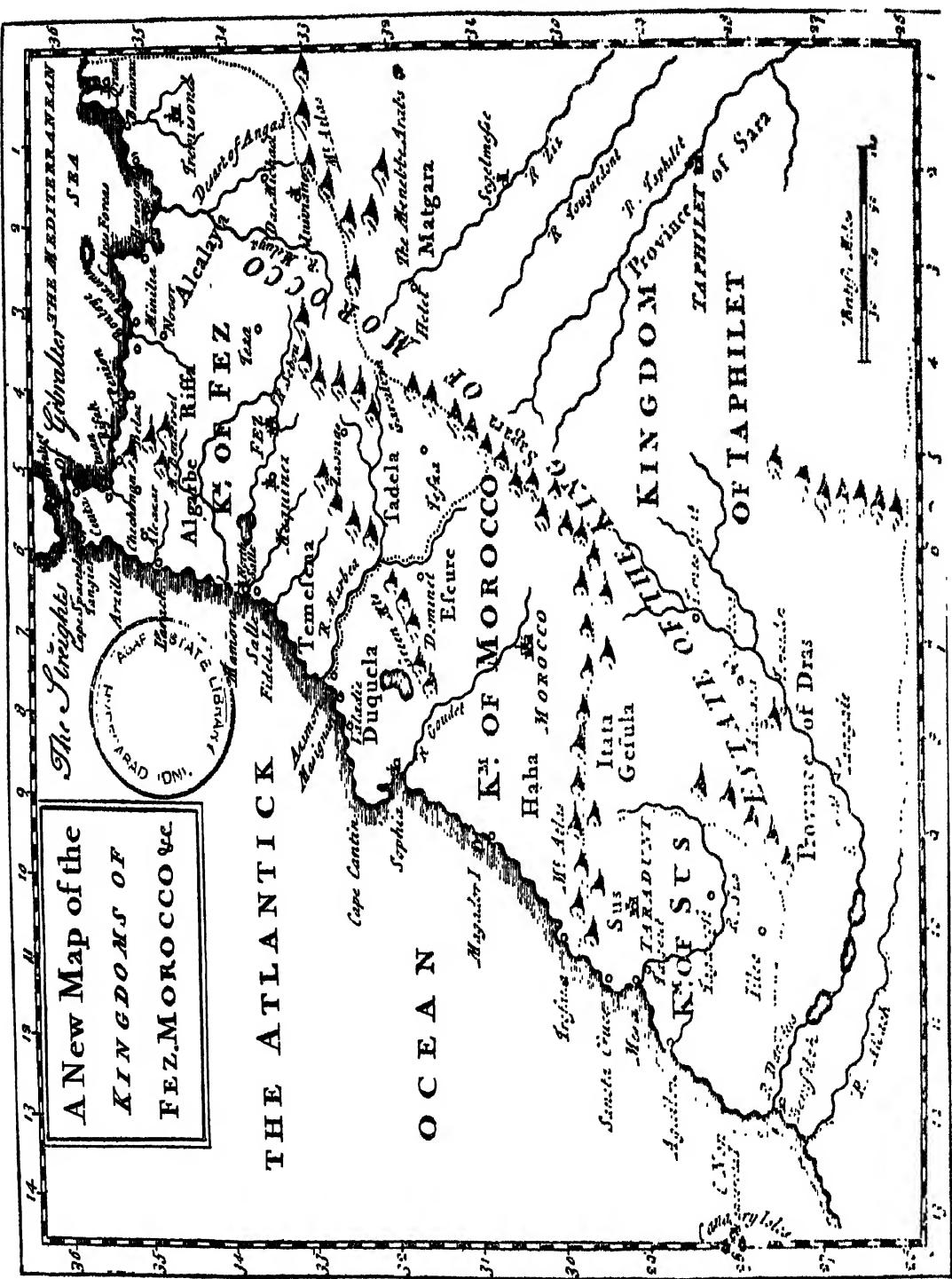
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CHAPTER I

MOULEY IDRIS

ONCE upon a time.' It has always been my wish to begin a book with that time-honoured phrase, the eloquent preface to so many stories, long and short, true and untrue, simple and adorned. Even now I should hesitate, did not the history books remind me that the year 787 A.D. in which this story opens, was in the midst of the most flourishing 'Once upon a time' period, a period when there were Caliphs at Baghdad and story-tellers to tell them never ending tales of love and adventure, and that the scene of its opening is laid in the land of the Thousand and One Nights. Before such credentials the last shreds of hesitation must vanish. The occasion is too lawful to be missed.

Once upon a time, then, there was a great battle at Fakh, near Mecca in Arabia. It was fought between the descendants of the Caliph Ali, son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed, and the armies of Al-Hadi, Abbazid Caliph of Baghdad and immediate predecessor of the famous Harun-Ar-Rachid.* It is said that the feud arose from the intemperance of some members of the saintly House of Ali, who for drinking wine were paraded with halters about their

* For the spelling of Arabic names I have employed the phonetic method used by most authors.

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necks in the streets of the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina,* but the causes of the conflict have no bearing upon our story, and we need only concern ourselves with the fact that the followers of Ali were beaten. The slaughter was great, but among the few survivors was a certain Idris Ben Abd Allah, the man whose destiny it was to found the new Islamic empire of the West. With the help of a faithful slave named Rachid he made his escape, and after nearly two years of wandering through Kairouan, Tlemcen, and Tangier, reached the prosperous town of Oulili, the Roman Volubilis, in the centre of Northern Morocco.

Although the arrival of Idris is generally taken to represent the beginning of the history of Mohammedan Morocco, he was by no means the first to introduce that religion into the country. For over a hundred years the Eastern Caliphate had been represented in Northern Africa by Emirs, whose seat of power was at Kairouan in Tunisia, and from that city various expeditions towards the West had been undertaken. In A.D. 669 a certain Okba Ben Nasa was well received at Ceuta and carried the standard of Islam to the Atlantic coast. Another governor of the Eastern Caliphate, Moussa Ben Noceir, penetrated as far south as Tafilalet, and then returned to Tangier, whence he began the conquest of Spain (A.D. 711). In consequence of these expeditions a part of the inhabitants of Morocco became Mohammedans, but they left no lasting effect on the country, and Idris Ben Abd Allah is rightly looked upon as the founder of the first dynasty of Moslem rulers.

Now the Aouraba tribe, which inhabited Oulili, was one of those already converted to Islam, and when they found that Idris was a descendant of the Prophet, they at once chose him as their chief. He married a woman of the tribe, named Kanza, and settled down to a life of patriarchal government, varied by occasional warlike

* *The Caliphate*, by Sir Wm. Muir, K.C.S.I.

episodes among the wild Berbers of the region. In the simplicity of his new existence, he no doubt forgot the bitterness of family disputes in Arabia, and perhaps even forgave the persecution of Harun-Ar-Rachid. But the redoubtable Caliph had neither forgotten nor forgiven. By his order the master of posts and caravans in Cairo had been beheaded for allowing the fugitive to escape from Egypt. Thence Idris had been followed through Kairouan, Tlemcen, and Tangier, till at last Oulili was reached. Poison was the means decided upon by the Caliph to rid himself of his enemy, and a certain Suleiman, a man both cunning and courageous, the emissary charged to carry out his orders. In the absence of the faithful Rachid, Suleiman came to the king and conversed with him of the perfume of the Yemen, till Idris was filled with the desire to have this perfume. Whereupon Suleiman offered him a phial and Idris died as soon as he smelt the contents.* He had reigned only three years and one month, and was childless ; but after his death Kanza bore a son to carry on his house and uphold the standard of Islam in its most western stronghold. Thus Idris I, the National Saint of Morocco, died and was buried in the Djebel Zerhoun, above the ruins of Volubilis, at the place which now bears his name—Mouley Idris. His son Idris II, brought up in the care of that same Rachid who had aided his father's escape from Arabia, eventually founded the city of Fez, whose special Patron Saint he is ; and at his death in A.D. 828 he left an Empire very similar in extent to the Morocco of to-day.

This short account of some events in the early history of Morocco will explain to the reader why the little village of Mouley Idris has been chosen as the subject of the first of these sketches. The ride across the undulating plain that stretches north-west of Mequinez to the Saint's resting-place in the blue and misty Djebel Zerhoun

* *History of the Kings of Tlemcen*, translated from the Arabic by Alfred Bel.

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was my first real 'trek' in the country. The pasturage is considered rich, but trees were rare and continual clumps of grey and thorny bushes made for monotony. Further on, however, came wild flowers in profusion, and with them the growing joy of space and horizon, and the subtle spell that weaves its meshes sooner or later round every traveller in what may well be called 'the Land of Paradox.' For there is much that is paradoxical in this strange country, much that upsets all preconceived ideas and for which one seeks an explanation in vain.

The vegetation is not African. Palms are conspicuous by their absence, and the ragged specimens that do appear seem to be making a mute apology for their presence in a landscape where they have no proper place. In the colour of towns and villages brown and not white predominates. The Eastern appearance of Algeria and Tunisia finds no place in Northern Morocco. Mosques have the pointed roofs of Europe, not gleaming domes. Minarets are square and thick, not round and tapering, and on every pinnacle and tower unwieldy flapping storks in their monstrous nests are eloquent of northern lands and Gothic spires and crowded chimney-tops. Certainly the people look what is vaguely called 'Eastern,' but even they have a roughness in keeping with their Western surroundings. North and South, East and West, Europe and Africa; it is in this strange jumble, so puzzling and yet so fascinating, that lies the charm of Morocco.

Such musing made the time pass quickly, and by mid-day the foothills began to rise, with little valleys and twisting ravines and dried up streams furrowing their faces. Wild-looking peasants appeared, seemingly from nowhere, offering 'labban' or curdled milk in wooden bowls. "Rest in the shade of our tents," they begged, "till evening makes journeying pleasant." And when I replied that time was short and that I must reach Mouley Idris before

sunset, there was a murmur of surprise. "Allah has given many days," said an old shepherd, in mild protest against the uselessness of hurry. For him the charm of Morocco was no secret to be discovered after much searching, and there was pity in his glance as he stood motionless while the stranger who had so much to learn passed on his way. How well Morocco understands the uselessness of hurry! Even the road seemed as if it would have liked to rest, for it was a mere track that wound its way round the western end of the range where the hills rose steeply, forming an amphitheatre from which the plain stretched in gradual descent towards the Atlantic, and where a few huts nestled among masses of half-buried masonry—the Volubilis of the Romans, the Oulili of Idris.

There is no need to describe the ruins of Volubilis. That has been done by more competent pens than mine. Suffice it to say that with their unerring judgment the Romans had chosen an admirable site for the town. Protected by the hills from north and east, and watered by the Oued Faraoun, which twists its way round the spur on which the *Zaouia* of Mouley Idris is perched, one feels that Volubilis has a future as well as a past. To one point concerning the ruins I should like, however, to draw attention, and that is the current and mistaken opinion that marble columns were taken from Roman ruins for the adornment of Moorish palaces and mosques. The few Roman towns in the country never possessed beautiful buildings with marble pillars. Roman settlements in Morocco were purely military, and their public monuments were built of stone. The objects found up to the present at Volubilis are no more than one would expect in a military colony, and the marble and bronze statuettes were probably sent from Rome. In Morocco marble columns only began to be used under the Merinides, and were brought from Italy and perhaps Spain (1200 to 1470). The earlier dynasties used stone, massively built, like the Tower of Hassan—

the ruins of Shella—and the Koutoubia at Marrakesh. Since my visit much excavation has been undertaken at Volubilis, and a motor-road carries the tourist rapidly, and in theory comfortably, to the remains of Roman civilisation in the plain below and to the shrine of Morocco's Patron Saint on the height above. Perhaps the shepherds no longer wonder at the passage of progress in the shape of motor-cars, but I am glad I rode across the plain.

On the crest of the hill the first houses of the town stood outlined against the evening sky, and at every turn of the road my servant and the soldier Ibrahim who acted as escort assumed a more important air. A visit to the resting-place of the first Idris was an event in their lives, and even I experienced a thrill of excitement as we passed beneath a small gateway and dived into the labyrinth of narrow streets, though in my case the reason was a different one. For me the sanctuary of the Saint was forbidden ground, and I could only hope for a distant view of it ; but the mystery of the place enveloped me and I felt that my journey to Morocco's most ancient shrine was also something of a pilgrimage.

Here let me digress for a moment to say a word about Ibrahim, for I find myself forgetting that the reader does not yet share my acquaintance with that personage. Although he was a prominent figure in my Moroccan days, his somewhat elusive appearance is not easily described. I never knew exactly what Ibrahim was like, but I did know that his utility was to a great extent fictitious, and for that reason there was a bond of union between us which we both appreciated. He was simply a Moroccan soldier of the old style now fast disappearing, an unassuming and cheerful representative of Imperial power, dressed in a queer pointed cap and tattered brown *djellaba*. His pride at standing between an enterprising infidel and the just wrath of his fellow countrymen was immense, partly on account of the extra pay and numerous feasts attached to the job,

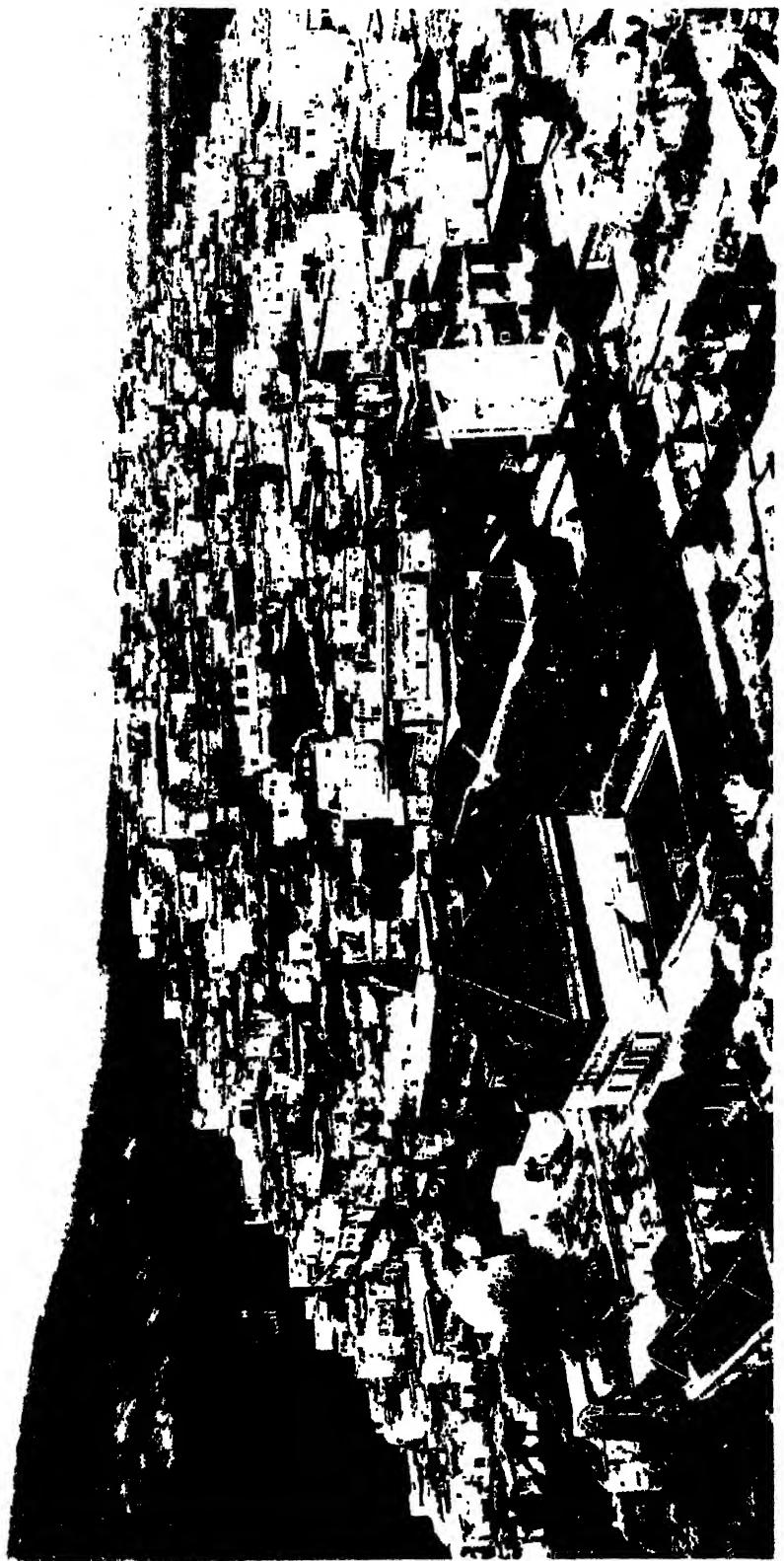
but also because he seriously considered himself to be the fulcrum of protective power. I often wondered if the rôle of cicerone undermined Ibrahim's religious scruples. He certainly showed an extraordinary keenness to get me into forbidden places, a proclivity which, of course, I was the last to regret. I think he looked upon it as a kind of game, because the goal once attained he would become frankly bored and could never understand my desire to remain for long in a mosque or courtyard, or why I should wish to place my camera in the most difficult positions. I soon discovered that his remedy for waiting was sleep, which never failed to come when called, and one can only hope that his dreams were of Paradise and not of the Hell of unbelievers. A picturesque figure Ibrahim, and a pleasant memory.

The position of Mouley Idris is imposing. Its tumbled mass of houses, more orderly and better built than most Moroccan towns, covers the whole hill-top, clustering round the buildings of the *Zaouia* like a mediæval city round its castle. Westward the plain stretches away to the horizon, south and east the Oued Faraoun winds far below like a colossal moat, and only on the north does the ridge continue towards the higher hills. Friends had urged me to take a tent, as the fanatical population would permit no Christian to sleep in the town, but on reaching the meadow where I was to camp a still better reason for its choice became apparent. Situated high above the town, it was a spot with a view that brought back the words of the Berber shepherd with renewed insistence, like the refrain of some old song, the refrain of a tranquil life, the refrain that Europe cannot learn, 'Allah has given many days.'

In the evening light the town at my feet looked like a plaque of grey enamel with a great emerald in its centre ; for, like all sacred and Imperial buildings, the roofs of both mosque and tomb were of green tiles, a colour which lends itself with wonderful effect to the

general scheme of Moorish architecture. The fact that they were the only pointed roofs in the town seemed peculiar, till I remembered that the difficulty of procuring beams of great length would restrict their use to public buildings of importance. The wood most generally employed is cedar, of which there is a good supply in the Atlas mountains, but the trees seldom grow to any height, and long beams are therefore rare. The pointed roof fascinated me, and as I watched, it suddenly turned from green to dull purple, and the terraces round it from grey to pink, as the flattened sun lost its hold on the sky and vanished beyond the plain. At the same moment a figure appeared in the gallery of the stumpy minaret at the corner of the mosque. At first it stood motionless. Then, with arms outstretched and head thrown back, it swayed gently from side to side as the first words of the evening call to prayer went out over the silent town.

I turned away at last, and sought the tent which had been pitched beside a group of mulberry trees with one great cypress in their midst. Along the path from the town a procession of six white-robed figures was approaching, headed by two lanterns that bobbed and swayed and threw a fitful light on what looked like twin mountains of silver behind them, while two bulky forms, walking a little apart, brought up the rear. The mass of white and silver, with its gleaming points of flame, resembled some strange reptile crawling up the hillside out of the gathering darkness, like the dragons in those very old pictures painted on wooden panels and hidden away in dark corners of Florentine galleries. Just for a moment the scene was strangely Tuscan, but the illusion did not last, and the white and silver dragon soon assumed the more acceptable if less romantic form of a feast and light whereby to eat it, carried by negro slaves and accompanied by two officials with friendly messages of welcome from the *Caid* of Mouley Idris. The compliment had evidently been expected by my servant, who had prepared no food, and it



was with a feeling of pleasant anticipation that I awaited the arrival of my first really Moorish meal.

With a dignity that Europeans could never hope to attain, the procession stopped before the tent. The lanterns were placed on the ground with two large silver-plated trays arranged on a carpet between them, and I found myself gravely returning the salaams and greetings of the bulky officials, who, to tell the truth, looked far too imposing and patriarchal to be carrying hospitality to a mere infidel. But the extent and sincerity of their hospitality I was soon to find out, and none of the more sumptuous and lengthy banquets since partaken of have left as happy a recollection as that simple meal eaten under the stars at Mouley Idris. Gastronomic descriptions, however exotic, generally weary the reader, but in this case the manner of the thing was so delightful that I cannot refrain from some account of the food and the ceremonial accompanying it. After depositing their trays on the carpet, the black slaves had vanished. They now reappeared from behind the tent, one armed with several native loaves like big pancakes, the other carrying a long-necked, metal jug. The loaves were placed against the side of the covered tray, and I knew my part sufficiently well to hold out my hands towards the jug. Having duly cleansed them with a few drops of water, the slave turned towards the two officials, thus giving me the cue I had been waiting for. Summoning to my aid the most complimentary phrases my Arabic could command I begged them to join me in my evening meal.

Then began a combat of politeness, in which the fact that the food was steadily getting colder played an entirely negligible part, and which etiquette forbade should end too soon. Fortunately I was, if not an expert performer, at least conversant enough with the rules of the game not to disgrace myself by any glaring mistake, and in spite of a growing desire to know what was hidden beneath the

shining cover of the dish, I took care to show no sign of haste. To my appeals the worthy men replied that nothing would induce them to accept so undeserved an honour as to eat with me, and when I insisted they simply rose and removed themselves with every sign of humility to a more distant position. Things seemed to have reached a deadlock, but here the black slaves intervened with the dexterity of long practice. They evidently understood that to prolong the comedy beyond the limits of tradition would mean an empty stomach all round and no satisfaction on either side.

When, therefore, my repertory of entreaties had reached the necessary pitch of intensity, they solved the problem by removing the cover of the larger tray and disclosing a mountain of rice from which great morsels of mutton protruded in tempting fashion. The two ancients gave one glance in my direction, as if to make a final estimate of my powers of consumption and the size of the steaming heap of viands, and turned their backs again with determination, leaving me free to set to with an appetite sharpened by a long ride and mountain air.

In eating a Moroccan dinner the most important point to remember is that only the right hand should be used to convey food from the common dish to one's mouth. Having that knowledge, the first thing to be done is to punch five holes, in the form of a cross, in the centre of the flat cake of bread ; a curious custom of which the explanation is given in the chapter on 'Clocks and Magic.' The next step, in good society, is to break off a small morsel and dip it into the sauce with the word '*Bismillah*'—'In the name of God.'* After that the dictum 'each for himself' holds good, but a polite host will seek choice dainties in the dish and press them upon his guests till they can eat no more. I had almost reached this enviable state of repletion when it occurred to me that a last attempt

* '*Bismillahi-r-rahmani-r-raheem*'—'In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.'

might induce the ancients to change their minds. Once more I produced my well-worn formula of invitation, which to my surprise was now accepted, and a moment later I found myself murmuring a second '*Bismillah*,' while the ancients punched their bread and dipped their belated sops into a fast congealing sauce. The ice of etiquette was broken, and soon they were glowing with what the French call 'the communicative warmth of banquets.' Waiting had sharpened their appetites to some purpose, and it was a much broken and diminished mountain of food that finally disappeared behind the tent with its escort of ebony servitors. During the repast we had drunk water only, but I was now to make the acquaintance of that most important Moroccan beverage, tea. With befitting solemnity the elder of the ancients—at least I took him to be the elder—seated himself before the second tray and removed the white silken cloth which covered it, revealing a quantity of objects, a silver-plated teapot and tea-caddy, a pointed loaf of sugar, tea-glasses and spoons, such as one sees in Russia and Persia, and last but not least, a bunch of fresh mint. At the same moment the four black slaves reappeared, the first with a steaming samovar, which he placed on the tray, the second with water-jug and towel, the third carrying a long-necked, silver scent-sprinkler, and the fourth a smoking incense-burner. Again my hands were cleansed, while rose-water rained upon me and smouldering aromatic roots filled the air with their fragrance. Then the ancients received the same attentions, holding open their wide sleeves to the perfumed smoke as if to absorb every particle of it beneath the voluminous cashmere robes. There was a growing weirdness in the uncertain candle-light that danced on the silent white-robed figures and made the faces of the black slaves gleam in the darkness, while, beyond the ravine, the rising moon seemed like a great eye opening wide to peep down upon us. Apprehensively I watched the wisp of smoke that hovered

over the incense-burner, but no *djinn* appeared. Possibly the incantations of my tea-making friend were not the right ones, but the process was performed with a mysterious solemnity that made it fascinating, nevertheless. Having warmed the pot and added the requisite spoonfuls of tea, the ancient seized the bunch of mint, drew it through his fingers, pulling off the stalks and holding only the leaves, which he stuffed in after the tea. Then a large lump of sugar was broken off and placed upon the open teapot, and while boiling water from the samovar poured over it, the white mass wobbled, hesitated, and finally disappeared into the depths below. With the closing of the lid I thought the ceremony at an end. Not so. After a moment's pause the ancient poured out a glass of tea—one only. This he tasted with certain lingual noises unknown in English drawing-rooms, tasted again, and with a satisfied look, emptied the remainder of his glass back into the teapot. The tea was made, the tea was good, and the honour of the *Caid's* envoy as a tea-maker was safe.

Glass after glass of the sweet, aromatic mixture we drank, and I cannot say that I found it disagreeable. Refreshing it certainly is. Now, among the Moors animated conversation, especially after a meal, is not encouraged. They mark the enjoyment of agreeable sensations by a tranquillity which is considered both refined and elegant. The polite remarks which passed between us over the tea-glasses were therefore divided by long periods of silence, but I gathered that there could be no question of a visit to the shrine of the holy Idris, and that even a nearer view was impossible. A nearer view, however, I did get, for when on my way through the town next morning I paid a visit of ceremony and thanks to the *Caid*, he received me in a room whose window looked across the intervening terraces to a deep quadrangle surrounded by pillared arcades with a great pointed roof of jade-green tiles rising beyond

it.* In vain I tried to keep from looking towards that window, for the notables of the town had gathered to see the stranger, and a dozen solemn pairs of eyes were watching me closely. The *Caid* was a benevolent old man and took no notice, and perhaps the ancients had spoken in favour of an infidel who knew how to eat, and who could drink the number of glasses of tea demanded by courtesy. So the success of the dinner may have covered my indiscretion.

That memorable meal may worthily close this chapter, for its departure was as fantastic as its arrival. The same white and silver procession, somewhat disordered and disjointed now, with but one candle alight and that a guttering remnant, moved down the hill where the cactus hedges spread a web of shadow in the moonlight, vanishing at length in a patch of blackness from which it did not emerge. The breeze of midnight, rising from the plain, stirred the branches of the mulberry trees above me : and faintly, as if whispered from ever so far, I seemed to hear the words, 'Allah has given many days,' that were to be the motto of my wanderings.

* Though I was unaware of it at the time, there is nothing of particular interest about the shrine of Mouley Idris Zerhoun, which was completely rebuilt by Mouley Ismaïl. The decorated ceiling and in fact most of the *Zaouia*, including the central green-tiled roof, have again been restored during the last century.

CHAPTER II

AN IMPRESSION OF FEZ

I USED to wonder if I should ever go to Fez. In a life of many wanderings it had remained a place set apart, endowed with a special attraction as indefinite as it was strong. Other cities had spectacular allurements, such as famous ruins or curious customs or mere difficulty of access, to draw one to them, but Fez, so far as I knew, had none of these. It involved no long journey, no risk or hardship, and perhaps for that very reason had been neglected, lying dormant at the back of my mind like a tale that has been thought out but never written. Was it the glamour of the name that tempted me? Fez of the land of pirates and adventure, the land where Dick Whittington made his fortune? I do not know. But when at last I entered the city it was the fulfilment of a very great desire.

I doubt whether to-day I should experience the same satisfaction. Although in Morocco the impressions that count are still unchanged by time, the country has cast off for ever the aloofness and stagnation that were at once its drawback and its charm. There are moments when one cannot help regretting the old days. To the impressionist they are a loss; but it is useless to kick against the pricks, and nobody will deny the advantages of modern civilisation to Morocco and its people.

Nowadays the means of transport is either railway or motor,



whereas I first approached Fez on horseback, tired and dusty from the innumerable tracks that lead along the broad plain of the Saïs. An out-of-date method I admit, but possessed of what advantages when the goal is the world's most mysterious and sinister city ! Motors and railway stations do not encourage a sense of mystery, and in the case of Fez El Bali they have been mercifully kept at a distance. There the word mysterious may still be used with justice. As for the other adjective each must judge for himself, down in the depths where there are still saints and story-tellers, and mosques and shrines that no unbeliever may enter, and where magic still lurks in the rushing water. The twentieth century has not penetrated far beyond the line of frowning ramparts and battlemented gateways surrounding the ancient city. They remain the ' Edge o' the Past,' the barrier between western civilisation and the mysteries of Fez.

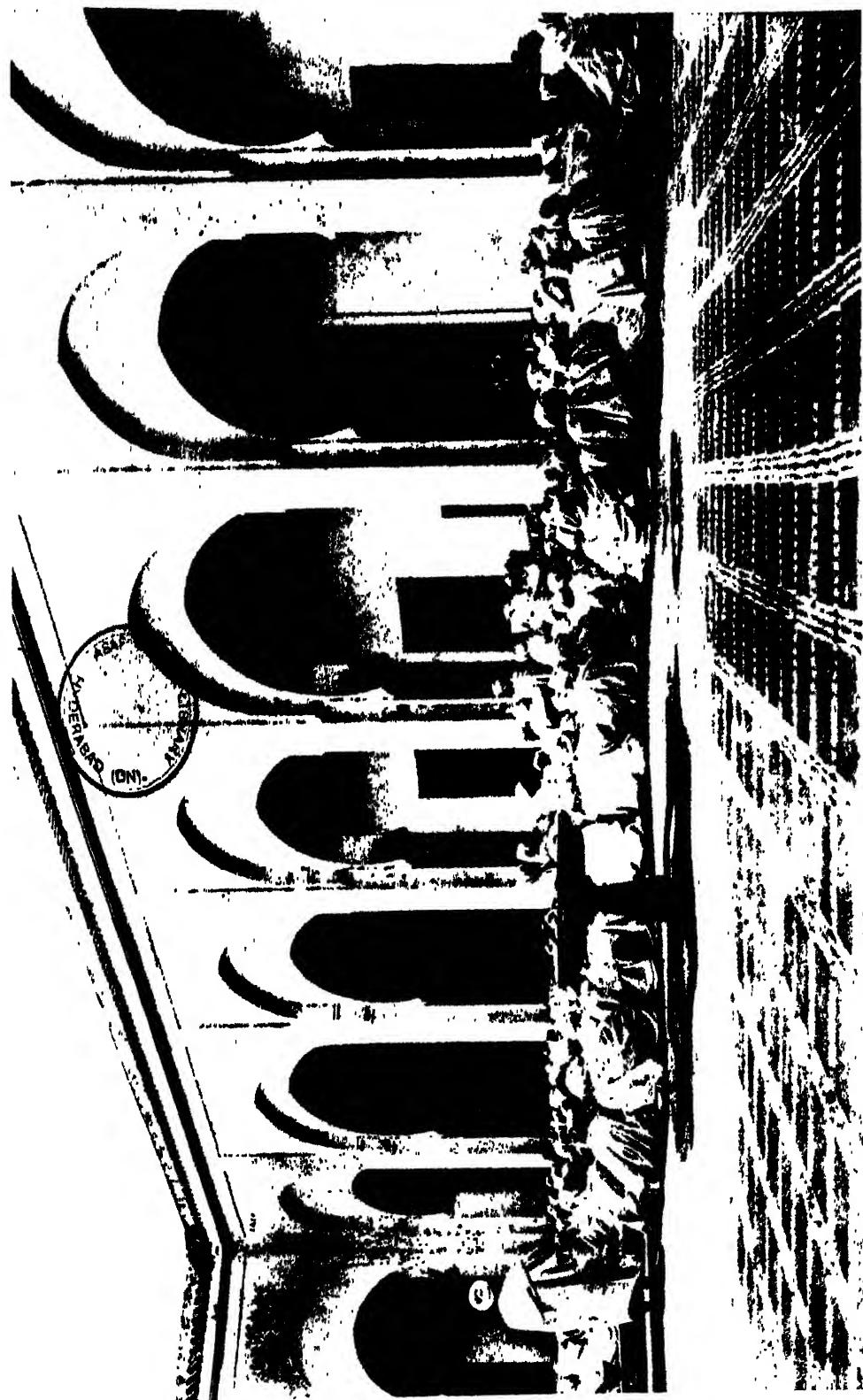
The city lies at the beginning of a deep cup-like valley, where the river Fez leaves the almost level plain of the Saïs and rushes steeply downwards to join the Sebou two or three miles below. According to the *Roud El Qartas** it was along the plain of the Saïs that Omeir, minister of Idris II, journeyed in search of a capital for his master's newly formed state. The springs of Ras El Ma (Arabic ' Head of the water '), source of the river about eight miles above Fez, first tempted him in favour of the well-watered plain and rich pasturage ; but continuing his way, a more protected position in the deeper valley was finally chosen. Those whose motors now dash along the excellent road to Mequinez may catch a distant glimpse of the ruined minaret of Ras El Ma standing solitary in the middle of the plain, the forerunner of the history of Fez. Coming from the Saïs, the town remains invisible till one is quite close to it, thereby increasing the sense of mystery. First appears the greyish line of battlemented

* Annals of the City of Fez, written in 1326 by Abou Mohammed Salah Abd Elhalim.

ramparts, sometimes higher, sometimes lower, but always imposing, that seem to bar the whole breadth of the valley. As one gets nearer, this barrier-like impression increases, the walls towering first on the right, then on both sides, till the triple arch of Bab Segma is reached. No traveller could fail to be impressed by this first great gateway of Fez. Its three arches of slightly different form, and the vast space of its walled approach, have a threatening appearance well in keeping with the might of Sultans. One is struck not only by the strength of these Moorish ramparts, but by the manner of their construction for spectacular effect. For without a doubt, the long approaches enclosed by walls of increasing height, and the vast esplanades growing gradually narrower and ending in massive gateways dominated by towers and bastions, were intended to impress and threaten friend and foe alike, and to give them time to ponder on the power behind the walls.

Beyond Bab Segma comes the first surprise. Instead of a town in the usual sense, one enters a network of vast courts and passages divided by fortified gates, known as Fez Djedid or the New Fez, the seat of government and military power. In case the word 'new' should prove misleading, I may mention that Fez Djedid was founded in A.D. 1276, so that it is new only as regards the original city of Fez El Bali in the valley below.

What a strange place it is, like a gigantic maze ! Walls and gateways, gateways and walls, and again great spaces with battlemented towers and endless lines of ramparts, so high that one can only catch an occasional glimpse of minarets and pointed, green-tiled roofs somewhere behind them. What do the roofs belong to, and how does one reach them ? Mystery. At each esplanade and gateway Ibrahim's satisfaction visibly increases. It is the moment he has been patiently waiting for, the moment when he should show the stranger the wonders of the capital. "A great town," I remark.



ROUTE TELQUID : THE OULEMA OF FEZ

“A great town,” comes the reply, and the tone is reverent. “By the will of Allah and the Holy Idris, it is the greatest town in Morocco”—and after a pause—“perhaps in the world.” Such pride is pardonable, and the more I look up at the walls of Fez the more I understand. Their immensity oppresses and repels, yet attracts with an irresistible force. A strange sensation.

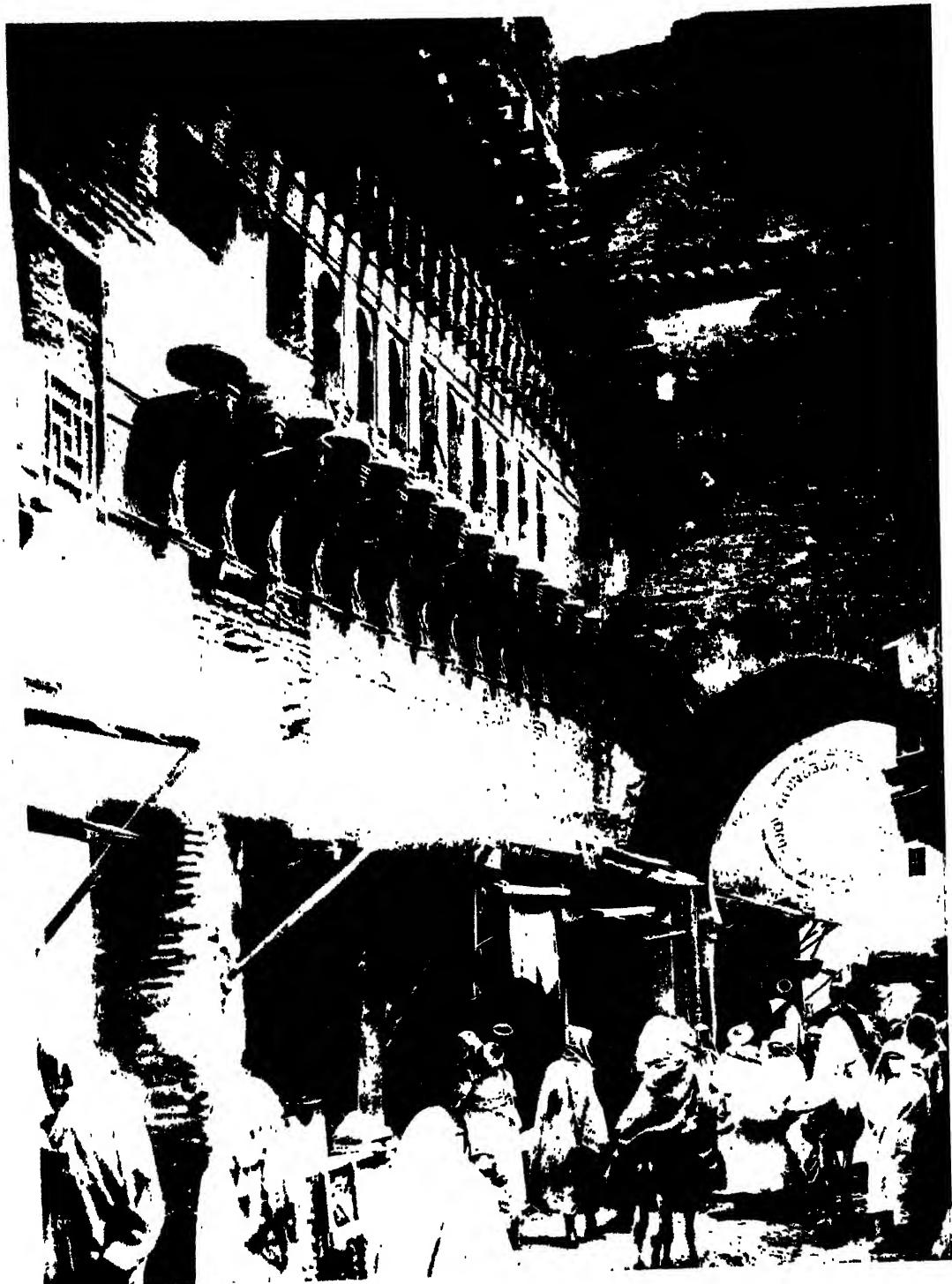
For a time the way remains broad, but at last it begins to narrow. Another gateway—modern this time—and the abrupt descent into Fez El Bali begins. Gone the empty spaces, the vast distances. The street is full of movement, and shops make their appearance beneath the houses on either side. Fez the mysterious is calling, but when I would hurry to answer the call, Ibrahim intervenes. It is true, he explains, that Fez is down there below us ; but first I must turn aside to the palace of Bou Jeloud which is to be my lodging. Bou Jeloud to-day, Fez to-morrow. There are many days. And with a sweeping gesture, Ibrahim points to a narrow lane facing me between blank walls.

Can that poor alley lead to a palace ? Must I leave the crowd that was growing thicker at every step, the living torrent drawing me down, fascinated, into the depths of Fez ? In the end the blank walls win the day, for I have never lived in a palace, and a palace in Fez must be the pinnacle of romance. So, with a last look of regret at the tempting downward path, I follow Ibrahim along the lane.

At the time when the first Merinide Emir, Abou Youssef Yakoub El Mansour, founded the new quarter of Fez Djedid, it was separated from the old city by open land of considerable extent. For centuries gardens covered the intervening space, but eventually a small palace was built there by the Sultan Mouley Hassan about 1886, forming a link between the two quarters. This palace the French Government has taken for the official residence of its representative, Marshal Lyautey. There have been many changes. Europe,

albeit with charm and discretion, has found a place in the narrow, high-roofed rooms. But when I first knew Bou Jeloud it was still a typical Moorish palace, the dream I had so often dreamed—of courtyards set with fountains, of gardens and strange pavilions, of terraces looking down upon tumbled roofs. It had nothing in common with the vast pile of buildings of less or greater beauty which we would call a palace in Europe, nor did its Moorish garden at all resemble the green lawns and formal flower beds of the gardens of England. Here, palace and garden were all one, a mingling of loggias inlaid with ancient tiles, of courts planted with trees and flowers, of fountains and canals. A deep cloister, into which cool, dark rooms opened, surrounded the inner court. Windows were small and high placed, but the great double doors rose almost to the roof, making the cloister really part of the rooms. Only in one part did the building boast of an upper storey, reached by a steep and narrow staircase. It once formed part of the women's quarters, and its windows commanded a wonderful view of Fez, spread like a patchwork of terraces and foliage, with here and there a pointed roof or a square minaret of blue and yellow tiles. From this inner court a broad arch led to the garden proper, a great oblong space also surrounded by buildings. Three of its sides were occupied by a raised loggia with more rooms, and on the fourth, still wilder ground, more orchard than anything, stretched away to the green roofs of the Imperial Palace.

Such was Bou Jeloud. From the loggia between the inner and outer courts—assuredly the coolest spot in all Fez—I used to watch the evening hours work their spell, and follow the garden's ever-changing glories. Poplars and elms, almond and fig trees, roses and yellow jasmine, masses of geranium vainly trying to eclipse the pomegranates beside them, the riot of growing things kept bringing snatches of Omar's quatrains to my mind, though in austere



THE HOUSE OF THE MAGICIAN

face

Morocco even the thought of wine were sinful, and Iran's outspoken poet anathema in this garden. Nevertheless, much in its appearance was Persian. Raised stone walks intersected the beds and formed an evening promenade for the rich Fasis, as the inhabitants of Fez are called ; and beside the walks were water channels fitted with many openings to regulate the flow, like the *hose** of a Persian garden. In the orchard beyond the open gateway nature ran riot. Roses peeped from among the wild flowers and high grasses, with cypresses looming black against the fading light, like sentinels among the mulberries and vines ; and there I found the strange pavilions of my dreams, filled, not with the forgotten treasure of some Sultan, but with great trays of golden cocoons that would some day yield silk to adorn the fair ones of Fez. Even sleep in this Moorish palace brought its surprises. One afternoon I was roused from my siesta by the sound of many voices, a vast hum of conversation outside my room. Peeping out cautiously, a strange sight met my gaze. White-robed figures filled the courtyard, seated beneath the high cloisters and in the open space round the fountain. Some weighty question was evidently under discussion, and I wondered if the fate of an enterprising infidel hung in the balance. The reality was reassuring, if unromantic, for the solemn conclave turned out to be simply a meeting of priests to decide various questions concerning the *Habous* or property of the church. A Moorish ecclesiastical council at my very door ! The occasion was too picturesque to be missed, and I at once took advantage of it, though needless to say the ecclesiastics did not know they were being photographed.

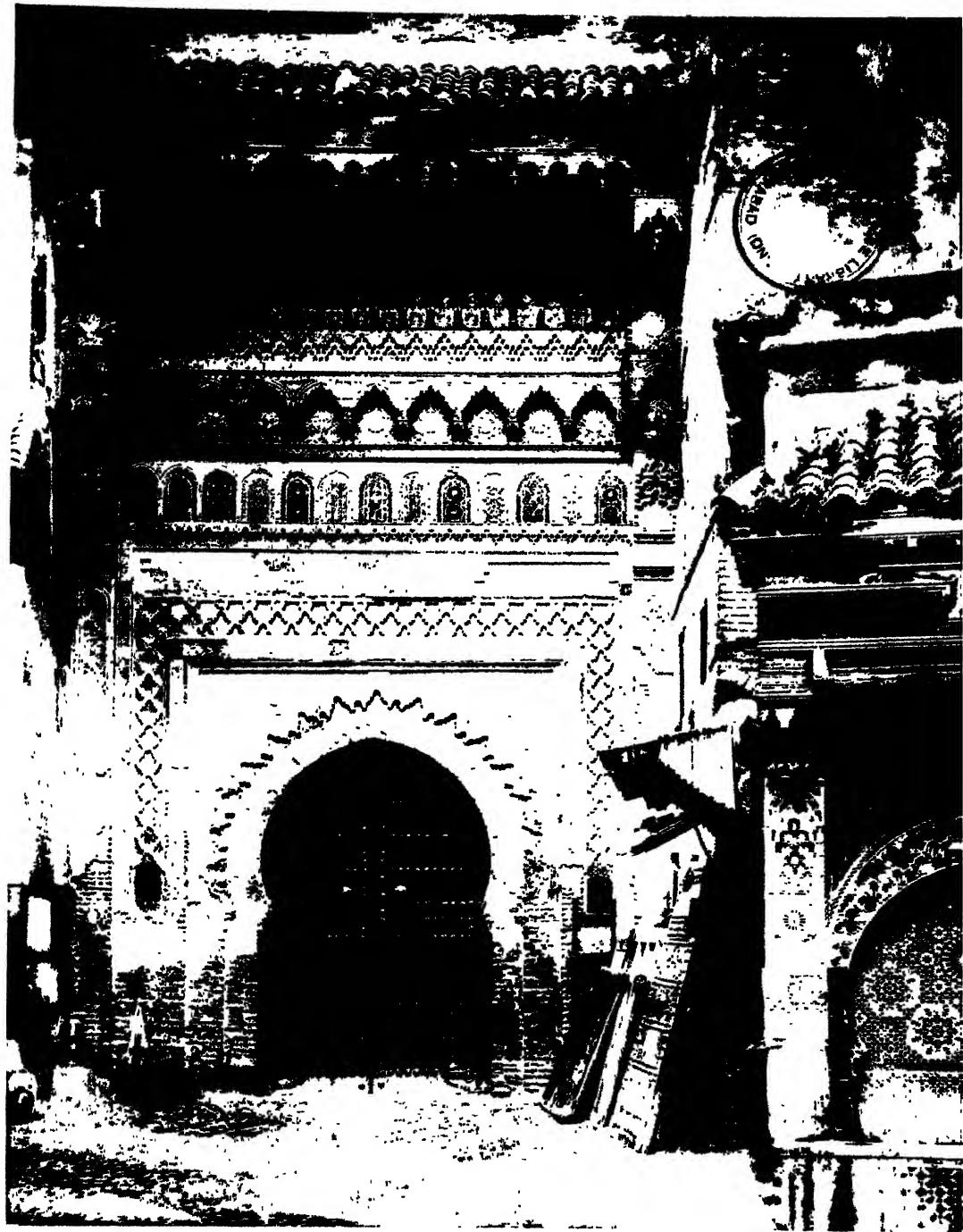
Bou Jeloud was an ideal place in which to linger, but not for its charms alone had I come to Morocco, and the call of the mysterious city soon brought me back to the descending street that had so

* Persian word meaning a tank or reservoir of an enclosed garden.

tempted me on the day of my arrival. It is known as the Talaa, one of the main arteries of the pulsating life of Fez, and at first seemed nothing but a series of arches, with alternating patches of sun and shadow leading downwards into the dim distance. On the high, windowless walls large pieces of stucco hung away from the brick behind them, like swords of Damocles suspended above the hurrying crowd. Some day they will fall and heads will be broken and the holy Idris thanked that the damage is not greater. Such things are the will of Allah.

Before long my attention was arrested by the famous 'House of the Magician,' to my mind quite the strangest building in Fez. It stands just opposite the medersa El Bouananiya, beside one of the numerous archways spanning the street. An ordinary shop occupies the lower part of the house, but above it are the remains of a very beautiful façade, consisting of a row of nine small windows (there were originally thirteen) surrounded by richly decorated plaster work, over which carved cedar corbels support a projecting roof with tiles of bluish green. The detail and proportion of the façade are beautiful in themselves, but it is the element of strangeness that gives to the building its unique appearance. Just below the windows a row of thirteen carved wooden consoles, each supporting a bronze bowl of curious flattish shape, projects over the street. The effect is most bizarre. It impressed me, not only on account of the scheme of decoration, but because it is most unusual to find so many windows opening upon the exterior of a Moorish house. To photograph the façade from the crowded street proved no easy task, and it was days before I could induce the owner of the opposite house to let me get a detailed picture from his window. The result, however, was worth the trouble, and encouraged me to face future difficulties.

That was my first impression of the building. At the time I had



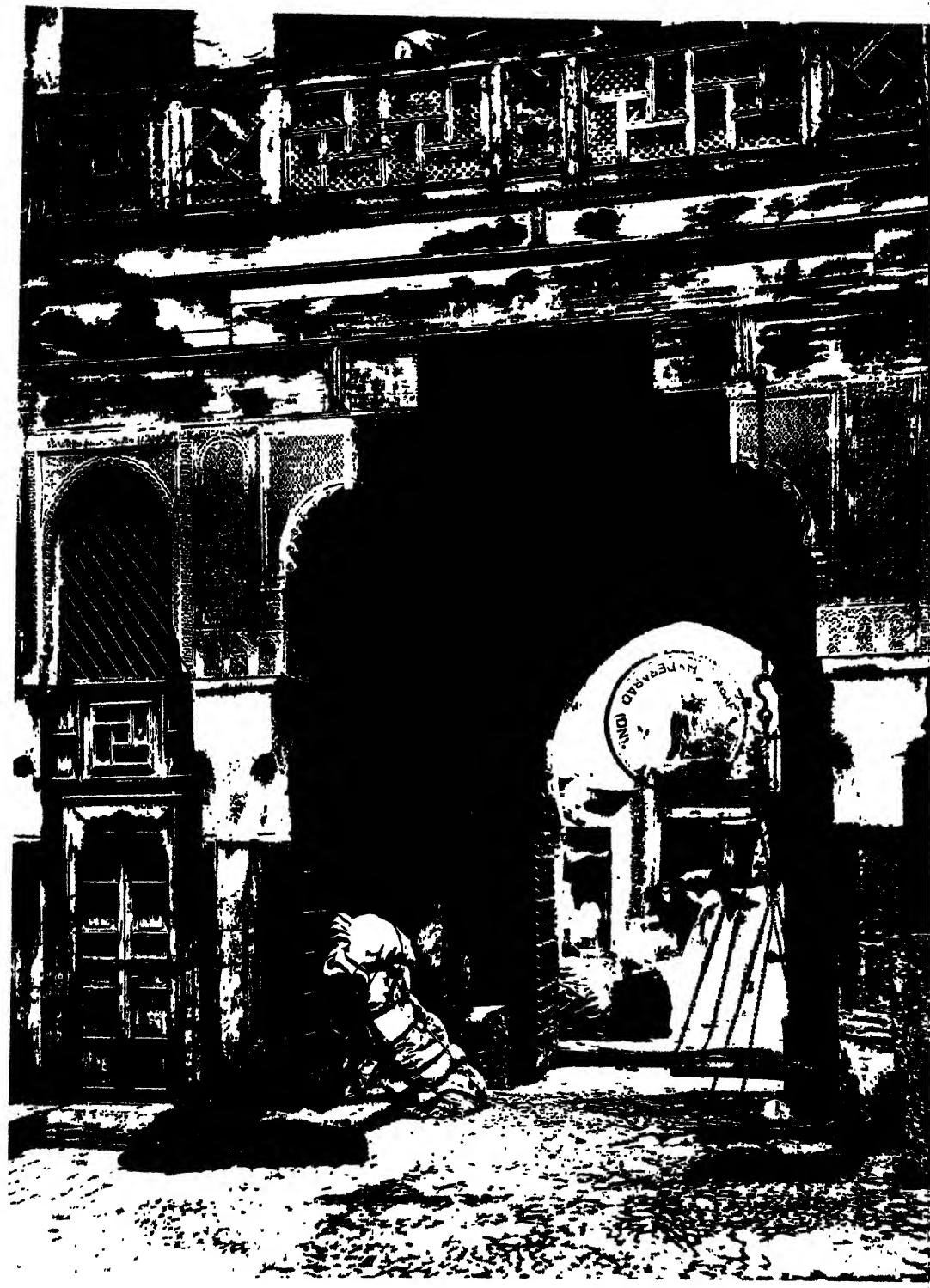
THE FONDAK EN NEJJARIN

no idea of the wonderment and speculation it has caused and still causes, nor could I imagine that its bowls and carved corbels are the remains of a machine for marking the hours, with spells and legends woven in its history. Such, however, is the case, and it is the strange interest of this history that makes me leave the House of the Magician for the present, and describe it in the chapter entitled 'Clocks and Magic.'

After such an architectural thrill I continued my way along the Talaa with growing interest. The street grew steeper and steeper, tunnelling under whole clusters of houses till at last, after a particularly long and dark passage filled with the rush of hidden waters, it came to an end in a small open space with a monumental gateway on its further side. For a moment I stood rubbing my eyes. The transition from darkness to brilliant sunshine was so sudden and the vision so unexpected. Before this massive, nail-studded door, in its wonderful frame, one seemed transported to a palace of the *Arabian Nights*. Its glory might be gone, its colours faded, but time had not effaced the beauty of its lines nor destroyed the proportion of the arcades of perforated stucco, wrought cedarwood, and inlaid tiles, mounting upwards to the deep canopy of carving beneath the green-tiled roof. And as if to show at closer quarters what such work is like, a perfect little fountain, with green and yellow mosaic and beams black with age, stood beside the gate. The archway led to the fondak En Nejjarin, or caravanserai of the Guild of Carpenters, a place in which travellers might lodge and merchants transact their business. Of the eleven caravanserais still existing in Fez it is the oldest and the most famous, and the carpenters may well be proud of it. The glimmer of flowered stucco in the shadows tempted me to enter and explore the courtyard, a narrow place of everlasting twilight, filled with remnants of former splendour. It was surrounded by deep galleries rising

to the patch of blue sky where the sunlight touched the walls ; and all the rest was cobwebs and dust and carving and decay. An enormous pair of scales hung in the entrance, for merchants still use the fondak, and caravans still start at dawn from its gate. " How old are the scales ? " I asked an ancient man who approached and gave me greeting. " I am two hundred and sixty years old," he answered slowly, " and my father lived three hundred years. In his youth the scales were already hanging there." And before I could ask if a certain English playwright were known to him, he had vanished into the darkness.

In the centre of Fez is the Kaiseria, Morocco's equivalent of the Caledonian Market, Bond Street, and the Stock Exchange rolled into one. It consists of a number of narrow shop-lined streets grouped round a tiny square, where city magnates meet to discuss their affairs, and auction sales of anything and everything are held. The Fasis are good business men, and quite a number have had commercial experience abroad—in Manchester or in France. Up to a few years ago almost every merchant was also a banker, as no banks existed in Morocco ; but with the growth of foreign institutions that branch of their activity is dying out. Happily the auction sales of the Kaiseria still remain, and I hope will continue unchanged. To buy something at one of them is a pure joy, though the object offered is rarely what one wants. But when something tempting does appear there are opportunities enough for examination, as the ' lot ' is carried through the crowd by a man holding it up for all to see, at the same time shouting the amount of the last bid. The Kaiseria is also the home of ' antique ' shops, cupboard-like places filled with a variety of unexpected objects, among which *may* be a pearl of price awaiting discovery by some lucky infidel. Though the silent merchant knows exactly where the treasure is, he watches unmoved while the infidel rummages among many worthless



IN THE COURTYARD OF THE FONDAK EN NEJJARIN : THE SCALES

things. If Allah wills, the infidel will find the treasure, and mentally he raises its price threefold.

While wandering through the tortuous lanes in the centre of Fez I made a discovery that brought with it a thrill of home in the midst of all this strangeness. No mosque or gateway or fondak this time, but simply the British post office, two rooms in an ancient house unadorned by stucco or mosaic and with no carving on its beams ; a prosaic fact in the city of mystery. Knowing the duty of every good citizen towards a post office, I entered and demanded stamps. And while the clerk—a native of some Eastern land—produced them, the question rose in my mind, How long had there been a British post office in the heart of Morocco ? I was about to voice my thought when the clerk's eye met mine and made me stop. "Six hundred years," it said, so plainly that I seized my stamps and beat a hasty retreat. Questions of age are indiscreet in Fez.

Beyond the post office the labyrinth of alleys grew less confusing. Traffic seemed to be concentrated in one fairly straight street leading away from the centre, and the houses were less closely built and not so high. Soon the ground began to rise, and walls and bastions towered on the hillside, with the ruined Merinide tombs against the sky line. Open spaces crowded with mules and donkeys made their appearance. Bales of merchandise and loads of grass littered the ground, while hardy-looking countrymen came and went, bargaining and disputing and calling upon the holy Idris to witness the lowness of their prices. Business moves slowly in Morocco, but at last bargains were settled to mutual satisfaction and animals safely stabled in the numerous fondaks which abound in this quarter, and the men moved away in twos and threes towards a massive gateway in the grey line of the wall, disappearing under its arch. From the position of the Merinide tombs on the hill, I knew that this was Bab El Gisa, the northern gate of Fez and

one of the most important. Once the quarter was chiefly populated by Jews, in the days when they were at liberty to live where they liked and had not yet been confined to the *Mellah*.* Since then it has remained unkempt and squalid, the only building of importance being the deserted and ruinous medersa built by Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdullah in 1760. Meanwhile the procession towards the gate kept increasing, and I followed, wondering what attraction could lie behind it for tired men whose work was done. The riddle was soon answered. Outside the walls a cemetery covered the hillside, with dozens of hooded figures lying motionless and silent on the grass between the tombs. In their midst, somewhat raised above the others, an old man recited verses of strange rhythm in a high pitched droning voice. I drew nearer, unperceived by the crowd whose whole attention centred on the greybeard in his white *djellaba*. For he was the man of tales, the story-teller by whom the legend and history of Asia and Africa have been carried down ever since there was anything to tell. He paused for a moment, and a guttural sigh rose from the audience a deep throated 'Ahr-r-r' of appreciation. Was it the adventure of some hero of the Thousand and One Nights that held the listeners spellbound? Or the exploits of Saladin? Or the tale of Queen Zobeida whose tomb stands by the Tigris at Baghdad? It mattered little. The voice went on, as it has done ever since Mohammed lived in Mecca, before even the holy Idris came to found an empire among the barbarians of the West. Suddenly the old man's eye fell upon the infidel who dared to come and listen among the faithful, and its look was full of scorn for that strange life which has begun to penetrate into the western outpost of Islam. Why, it seemed to ask, would you seek to alter what has been unchanged for so many centuries? And having no answer to give, I turned back towards the city.

* Special quarter in every Moroccan town outside which Jews are not permitted to live.

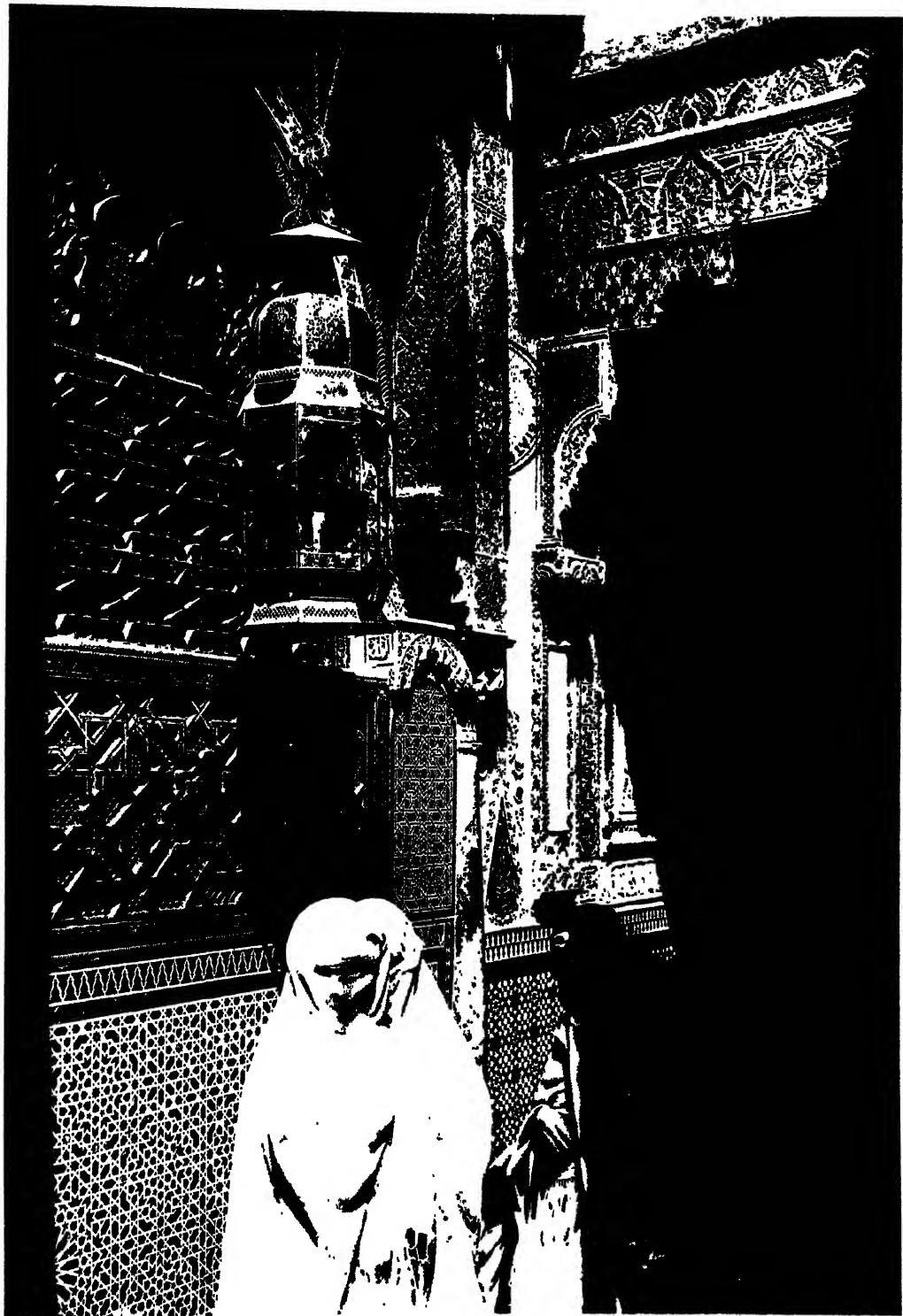


CHAPTER III

HOLY PLACES

THERE is a tale of a man who had never heard of Mouley Idris. He was promptly made a saint, for such ignorance could only mean madness and madness is holy. But I think that man would be hard to find in Fez to-day, even among the unbelievers who come in motor-cars and for three days desecrate the city with their presence. To the Fasi the shrine or *zaouia* of Mouley Idris is the centre of life. From birth to death the Saint is connected with every event in his existence. Nothing is undertaken without the benediction of Mouley Idris. People swear by him. Beggars demand alms in his name. His personality pervades the city to such an extent that the numerous other saints of Fez have to be content with an honourable place in the shadow of his fame. The *Zaouia* of Mouley Idris stands in the centre of Fez El Bali and has been repaired on several occasions. When one considers the veneration in which it is held, it seems incredible that it was ever allowed to fall to ruin. Such, nevertheless, was the case during the centuries following the downfall of the Idrisite dynasty, and it was not until 1437 that the Merinide Emir Mohammed undertook its reconstruction. The actual building is, however, of much more recent date, being due to that famous figure in Moroccan history Mouley Ismaïl. In another chapter I shall touch upon this Sultan's hatred of Fez, and the probable reason why

he endowed it with no monuments. The reconstruction of the venerated shrine is his one work in the city, and it is certain that only the greatest sense of piety could have induced him to undertake it. The new mosque and its graceful minaret were added still later. They date from the early part of the last century, Mouley Ismail's work having been restricted to the purchase of land and the enlargement of the existing buildings. A richly embroidered pall covers the actual tomb, which stands under a canopy of carved cedar inlaid with gold and other metals, and is flanked on either side by the old and new mosques. Houses for the priests, and a special lodging for those who used to seek sanctuary within the sacred precincts, complete the *zaouia*. This question of sanctuary is of the greatest interest. Up to a few years ago it was one of the customs which seemed as if they would never be modified. In Fez there were numerous tombs of saints which served as refuge to all sorts of delinquents, though Mouley Idris was the favourite, and those who were not too hard pressed preferred to place themselves under his protection. To quote Eugène Aubin, ' When a criminal has committed a crime, when a debtor goes bankrupt, when an official has dissipated the government's money, or when a *caïd* feels that the moment of his disgrace is at hand, one and all fly to this refuge.' The procedure, in cases of civil law, was then for the imperial authority or the creditors to negotiate with the refugee with a view to some arrangement ; but where murder, theft, or other crime had been committed, it is difficult to see where the matter could end. Until lately the system has by common consent remained intact, for even the most highly placed never knew when their turn might come to be persecuted. But with the advent in Morocco of more modern ideas of government, such a state of things could not long remain possible, and the right of sanctuary for evildoers in the *Zaouia* of Mouley Idris has now been done away with. The opening



OUTSIDE THE SHRINE OF MOULEY IDRIS

to unbelievers of the street beside the shrine was also a necessity, for the forbidden zone cut the city in two, making access from the upper quarters to the *souks* and the Kaiseria impossible for Christians without a long detour. So to-day we may walk in places where, but a few years ago, instant death would have been our fate. What effect, one may ask, does such a drastic measure have upon the native mind? When one remembers all that Mouley Idris means to the Fasis, and the past centuries of custom and prejudice, one would expect a pessimistic reply. But as a matter of fact the attitude towards unbelievers, even of the fanatical population of Fez, has undergone a change. The practice of tolerance is beginning to make progress among them, though I doubt whether as yet it means anything more than submission to *force majeure*. One thing is certain. The successful growth of tolerance must depend upon the manner in which it is imposed. In that respect the example of Fez will no doubt prove instructive.

Of course I have never actually seen the tomb of Mouley Idris, unless the hasty glance towards the open door of the shrine, which is all that discretion and safety allow, can be called seeing. A window decorated with a screen of wrought iron and carved wood, in the alley at the side of the *koubba*, is as near as one can hope to approach, and even there it is not good to loiter, though the temptation to watch the crowd is almost irresistible. The window is a specially interesting spot. There are always people about it, some kissing the mosaic wall with signs of deep veneration, others touching the wooden screen with their fingers, or dropping coins through a hole in the centre of the carved woodwork. As to the front door of Mouley Idris, the hasty glance mentioned above reveals but little, though what it does show is unexpected and incongruous. Beyond the entrance with its great chandeliers, a row of gleaming objects looms in the darkness. Another hasty glance and their identity is

disclosed. Against the wall of the mosque stand grandfather clocks, high on their polished pedestals, their brass-bound faces shining doubtfully as if to ask why they are there. Why indeed ? The clocks of Mouley Idris tell no hours and minutes, nor mark the days that make the Saint ever holier as they pass. Their hands are still, their pendulums have forgotten how to swing. But there is a reason. Not long ago a distinguished writer said that the clocks of Fez stopped three centuries ago. I think he was wrong. In Morocco clocks have never been mere timekeepers. The Moors have taught us their real use. Not to repeat each day that life has been shortened by so much, being wound to fresh efforts when they would cease and be silent ; but to prove that time is simply an ornament of existence and that if we know the hours of prayer the days of Allah need no counting.

An anecdote of close observation and deep feeling was told me by an American lady. " As we hurried past the Shrine of Mouley Idris," she said, " I naturally kept my eyes on the open door of the mosque. I could see nothing inside, but standing in the doorway was a very old man. He eyed me with bitter scorn, then turned away and leaned his head against the wall with the most dignified gesture of sorrow I have ever seen, a silent appeal against the desecration of the holy places of his faith. I tell you, it made me feel ashamed of being there."

It is well that there are some places where we cannot penetrate, some things that we may not see. To-day the world holds so few secrets that those remaining should be jealously guarded. Let Mouley Idris be one of them ; a name that becomes familiar and rings in our ears long after the picture has faded, a name of benediction—the litany of Fez.

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It is a curious fact that the two most famous mosques in the



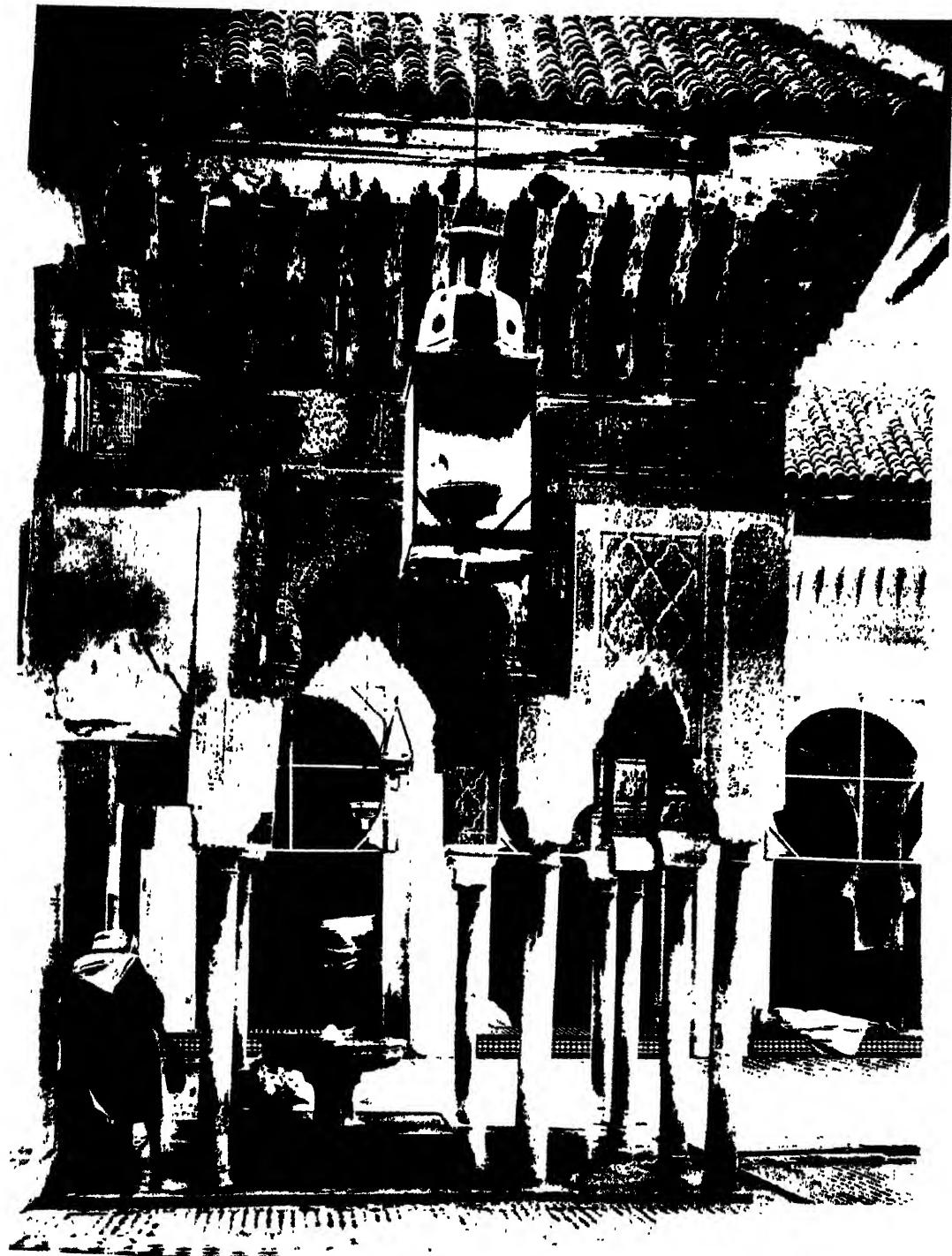
THE MOSQUE OF EL KAROUIYIN : THE LIBRARY DOOR

Moroccan capital should have been founded by women, whose position, from the religious as well as the social point of view, has always been one of inferiority in Moslem countries. It proves that on the rare occasions when women did emerge from the state of seclusion and ignorance to which climate and custom had consigned them, they showed a capability for greatness which must have given their husbands furiously to think, and probably caused the *hareem* doors to be guarded more jealously than ever. Their public activities had in nearly every case the same object—an object which could only be approved and praised by all—namely, religion. It would have been difficult to condemn religious ardour in beings whose possession of a soul was considered doubtful and whose chances of attaining Paradise were practically nil. Any holy act on their part could only be a step in the right direction, however distant the goal. But to return to our mosques. In the early days of its existence the City of Fez was populated to a great extent by immigrants from the province of Andalusia in Southern Spain and from the town of Kairouan in Tunisia. The two groups made their settlements beside the river, the Andalusians on the southern bank, the people of Kairouan on the north. Now among the latter, we are told, was a certain wealthy man, Mohammed Elfeheri by name, who, with his daughters Fatma and Miriam, had paved some small part of the road to Paradise by following the holy Idris on his journey to the West. The influence of the ladies was not long in asserting itself, for on the death of Elfeheri they announced their intention of endowing the city with two mosques, to be built one on either side of the Oued Fez and named after their respective quarters. Thus, in the year 245 of the Hegira (A.D. 859), the two great mosques of Fez were founded, Fatma undertaking the construction of El Karouiyin, and Miriam of El Andalous.

So runs the legend, and I am assured that in what concerns El
F

Andalous it is nothing but legend. The love of symmetry so prevalent among historians of the time would doubtless tempt them to attribute the foundation of the two mosques to the piety of two sisters, so we must be content with the established fact that they date from the same epoch. The place of honour is naturally held by El Karouiyin, which, besides being the largest mosque in Fez, is practically the only seat of learning in Morocco. With the numerous medersas or colleges scattered through the town, it forms a university second only in importance to El Azhar in Cairo (founded A.D. 971), and still enjoys the prestige bequeathed by a glorious past. Curious details of its building have come down to us. Not only were the necessary stones and sand procured from a quarry situated on its own ground, but by order of the pious Fatma a well was dug in the courtyard to supply both work and workmen with water, thus ensuring for the sacred edifice materials that were pure and untouched by the world outside. The historians of those days were true artists. What could be more effective than the statement that from the beginning of the work till its completion Fatma fasted ? It gives just that hint of personal sacrifice necessary to the tale, and one can only hope for the lady's sake that in the Morocco of A.D. 859 there were no unions to regulate the pace of labour.

The original building was of very modest size, measuring not more than ninety feet from north to south, and possessing but four naves or aisles, a tiny courtyard and a *mihrab* or niche indicating the direction of Mecca, which must have stood about the centre of the present mosque. For a time it sufficed, but soon the growing population of Fez made enlargement imperative. The *Roud El Qartas* tells us that about A.D. 1100, under the Almoravid dynasty, the Cadi Mohammed Ben Daoud bought the houses and lands on the south and east of the mosque, certain Jews who refused to give up their property being expelled with compensation. To the



THE MOSQUE OF EL KAROUIYIN : ONE OF THE FOUNTAIN PAVILIONS

original gateway were added Bab El Fakharin (the Potters' Gate), and Bab El Echemain (Gate of the Wax-sellers). Last, but not least, the building of the minaret was undertaken, and though one cannot but admire its simplicity and strength, it is far from possessing the elegance so characteristic of later Moorish work. But when ancient buildings lack beauty, legend often steps in and makes us look again. In this case tradition has it that when the minaret was finished the descendants of Idris quarrelled over the ownership of his sword. In order to solve the difficulty the Imam of the mosque, a certain Ahmed Ben Boubeker, bought it and placed it on the summit of the tower, thus satisfying all parties. So to-day we can raise our eyes above the square minaret with its green-tiled cupola to where a silver shaft points proudly up to heaven—the sword of Idris.

Added to and embellished by the piety of successive generations, the sacred edifice now assumed its present dimensions and appearance. The people of Fez may well have been proud of their mosque, for no less than 22,000 people can worship beneath the aisles that stretch, dark and mysterious, beyond the great open courtyard. But if the size of Karouiyin is remarkable, its architecture is disappointing. The rows of low arches supported by square pillars give an impression of heaviness to the building which, with the exception of the two pavilions described later, is somewhat lacking in ornament. Colour there is, for through its eighteen doors flows a continual stream of worshippers and students. No Christian may enter, but it is possible as one hurries by to catch a fleeting glimpse of the vast rectangular space, bounded by a single cloister on north and west, with the portion known as the Library on the south, and to the east the mosque proper. It appears that up to the reign of Abou Inan Farés (1348), a personage of whom one hears a great deal in Fez, the mosque of Karouiyin possessed very few books,

and certainly no real library. As we shall see later on, Abou Inan was a great patron of all learning, and it is not surprising to find that the important collection of books upon religion, language, medicine and other sciences, which the library of Karouiyin at one time possessed, was primarily due to him. There were numerous copies of the Koran, and a librarian was paid to keep the books in order and to help the public in any researches they wished to undertake. Books were lent out, just as in our public libraries, and special registers arranged for the purpose. Later on a notable addition arrived in the shape of the thirteen mule-loads of books sent from Spain, which had been kept in the medersa Es Seffarin. But in spite of all these precautions the library of Karouiyin was doomed to disappear. In course of time the librarians became less careful and the readers less honest. Books were lost, or sold by needy students, till, to use the words of one of the leading *oulema** of Fez, the library was absolutely pillaged. An inventory made in 1916 disclosed the fact that, of the wonderful collection of the time of Abou Inan, only about 1,500 manuscripts remained, including the copies of the Koran.

The lighting of such a vast building must have been a difficult and dangerous undertaking, and it has often been a source of wonder to me that the mosques were not more frequently destroyed by fire. Quantities of carpets, miles of matting, carved wooden screens and cedarwood ceilings thick with paint and gilding, all these things formed an inflammable mass ready for the least drop of burning oil from the numerous chandeliers. The use of ' chandelier ' instead of lamp may appear strange, but it is the only word exactly describing a construction which is really a stand for a number of lamps. Karouiyin, we are told, contained one hundred and thirty such chandeliers, of which ten hung in the central nave. The largest of

* Ecclesiastical authorities.



THE MOSQUE OF EL ANDALOUS AT FEZ : THE NORTH GATE

these cost seven hundred and seventeen silver dinars, or about £400 of our money. It weighed nearly three quarters of a ton, and was fitted with five hundred and twenty lamps—six more than the famous chandelier at Taza which will be described in another chapter. The total number of lamps in the mosque must have been well over two thousand, of which seventy were in use every night. At one time it was customary for the lamps of the great chandelier to burn from the beginning to the end of the month of *Ramadan**, but the cost became so great that eventually they were lit only on the twenty-seventh night of the fast. So wonderful was the illumination of Karouiyin that it even inspired the poets. 'The chandelier,' writes one, 'is like the soul of a true believer, humbly trembling before God in the night.' Another makes an interesting reference to magic. 'By the grace of the Master of the World may I protect these lamps against the unknown dangers of the Evil Eye,' is his pious prayer. I cannot resist mentioning a third word-painter, evidently a modernist, who compares the flames to "vipers' tongues dancing in the mid-day sun," certainly the truest and most picturesque simile of all. In spite of the presence of so many lamps no organisation seems to have existed against the obvious danger of fire. There was water and to spare, but after all such things were best left in the hands of Allah.

Three fountains stand within the courtyard of Karouiyin. That in the centre boasts of no special features. Its copious stream is supposed to be drawn from Fatma's well, but even saintly origin has to give way before the masterpieces of Moorish art placed at either extremity. They are identical, and consist of a marble basin raised upon a single column about three feet in height, protected by a pavilion abutting on the lateral arches of the cloister. So beautiful

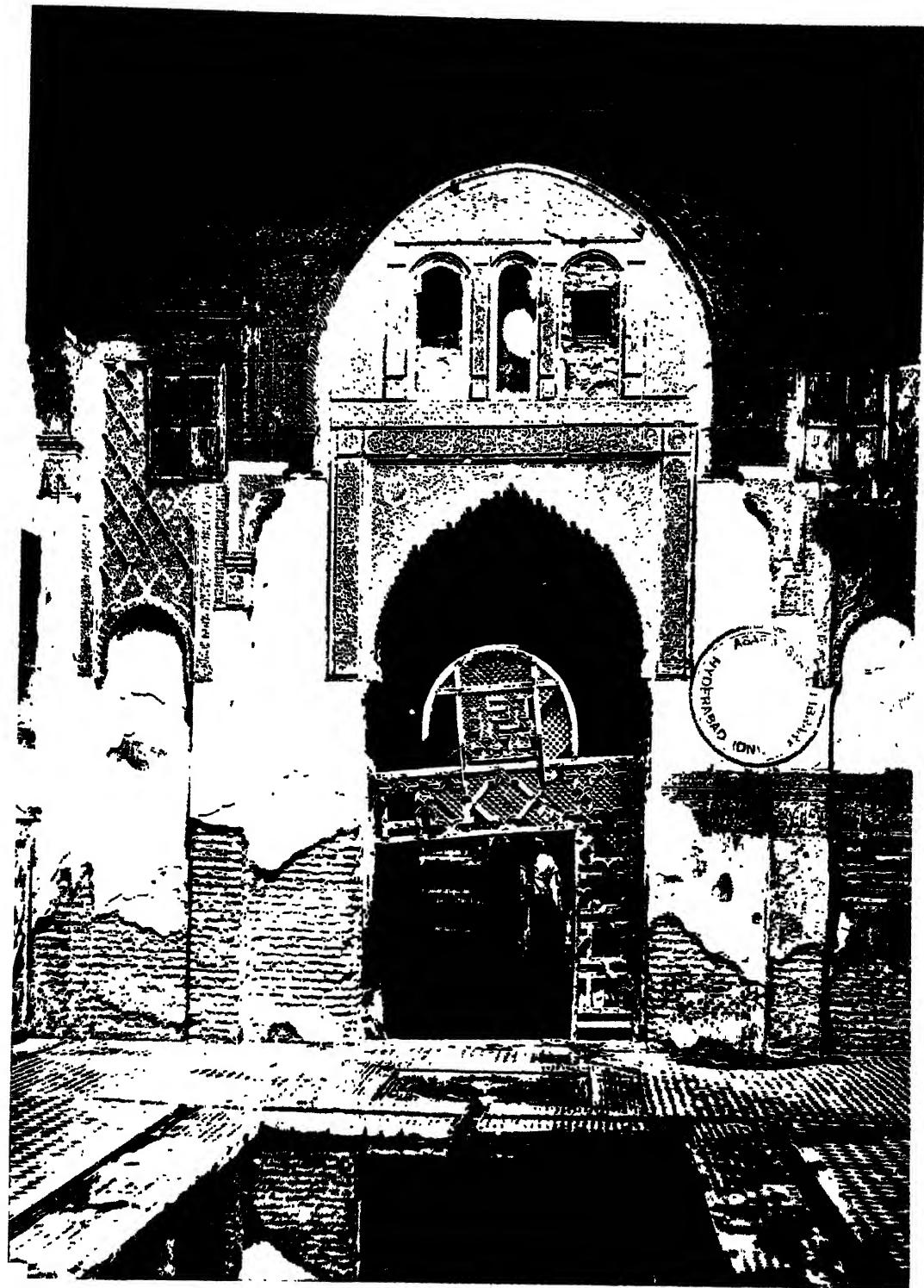
* The month in the Mohammedan year in which absolute fasting from dawn to sunset is required.

are these pavilions that the admiration of travellers and writers is not to be wondered at. Although the projecting eaves with their high, pointed roofs of green tiles at first seem somewhat top-heavy, this impression is removed by the scheme of changing colour and gradually increasing lightness of material beneath them, leading downwards from the black of richly carved cedarwood beams, through white stalactite arches and panels of flowered stucco, to the eight reed-like, marble columns which support the whole. Such grace makes one forget the squat pillars of the mosque, and at once brings the kiosque in the Court of Lions of the Alhambra to the mind. But another glance stops comparison. Resemblance there is, no doubt, but that is all, for the fountains of Karouiyin have a charm Grenada never knew.

A curious custom prevails at El Karouiyin of chanting prayers from the minaret during the last five hours of night. The story tells how a wealthy merchant who lived close by the famous mosque once lay on a bed of sickness. Wearied by the monotony and solitude of the hours of darkness, he determined to found a brotherhood consisting of ten *mueddins* or chanters of the call to prayer, who should break the stillness by the sound of their voices. They were given the title of 'Companions of the Sick,' hereditary posts, which in some cases have remained in the same family for hundreds of years. Each *mueddin* in turn chants certain prayers for half an hour, the last at the end of his time lighting the lantern which heralds the approach of dawn.* Their names are well known, and so surely do the Fasis distinguish the different voices that anyone waking in the night can tell the hour by them without hesitation. Chanting also takes place at El Andalous, for the last three half-hours of night only, but I have never heard of it being done elsewhere.

Situated on the high ground beyond the Oued Fez, the mosque

* The ordinary prayers one hour before and just at daybreak are included in the chanting.



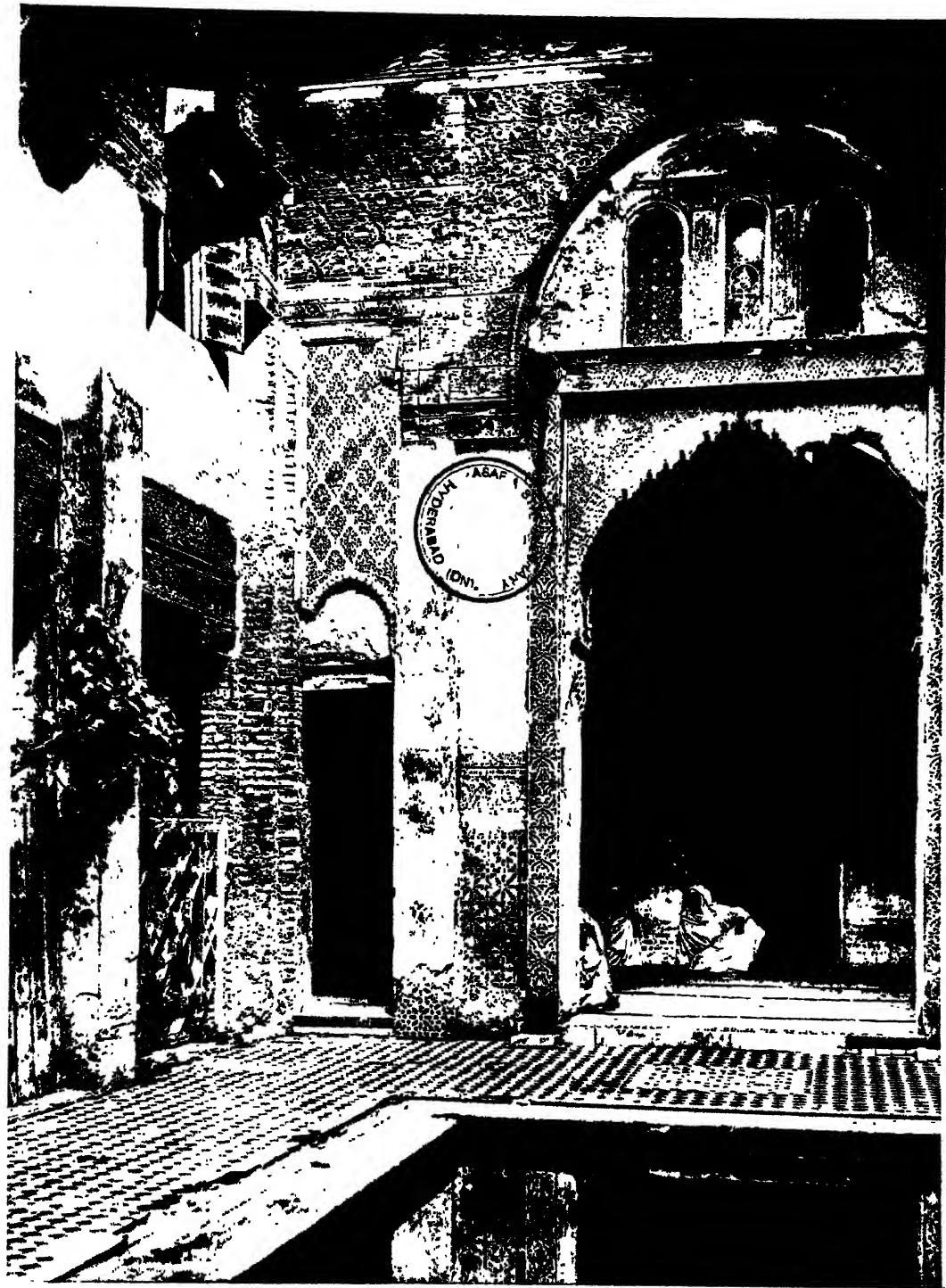
THE MEDERSA EL SAHRIDJ : ENTRANCE ARCHWAY AND FOUNTAIN

supposed to have been founded by Miriam dominates that part of the city once occupied by the immigrants from southern Spain. To reach it one must follow dark *souks* and streets that twist and turn seemingly in every direction till the bridge over the river is reached. It is known as Bein El Moudoun, 'Between the cities,' a busy spot, for in Fez bridges are rare, and its cobbles resound with the clatter of men and animals hurrying to and from the centre of the town. Hither and thither they sway and scatter, and though at first sight the scene appears to be the usual Eastern medley of colour and dirt, there is a difference, a roughness in both buildings and people that is of the West.

On either side of the steep arch vendors of sweetmeats and other luxuries call their wares, vying with each other to tempt the purse of the simple country-folk while the townsmen smile and whisper knowingly. Perhaps some pilgrims will stop to buy as they pass from the darkness of the tunnel-like streets into the glare of the afternoon sun. Now a group approaches, slowly making its way through the chattering throng, but the merchants cry out in vain. Pious zeal flashes from the pilgrims' eyes, but their wallets are empty. Allah will give. Their tattered robes are caked with dirt, but what matter? Is not a pure soul better than a clean *djellaba*? The holy sanctuary of Mouley Idris has been visited, and beneath the cool arches of El Karouiyin they have heard dignified discourse on the interpretation of some verse of the Koran. And now, before passing to other shrines, the sister mosque claims these simple countrymen of Morocco for the evening prayer. Beyond the bridge the dusty figures toil up the street leading to the north gate of El Andalous, and disappear beneath its imposing arch. This gate was built by the Emir Ennaser of the Almohade dynasty, one of the greatest beautifiers of Fez. The superstructure, almost as high again as the actual gateway, with its penthouse of green tiles supported by

the usual arcade of carved cedarwood, is of a form and decoration peculiar to Fez, and to this period of its history. Originally the mosque of El Andalous was a simple chapel or oratory, consisting of but six rows of columns and a small courtyard shaded by a few trees. It was enlarged, and the minaret added, about the same time as that of El Karouiyin, with, unfortunately, the same architectural plainness. In the tenth century Moroccan art was still in its infancy, and one cannot but regret that each mosque should possess its later masterpiece—the pair of fountain pavilions in the one case, the monumental gateway in the other—in a setting of so little beauty.

Evening has come, and the pilgrims appear once more in the lengthening shadow of the arch. They pause for a moment on its threshold as if in doubt, then turn to the left along a narrow lane beside which is a small canal of swiftly flowing water. At a distance of a few yards a ruined doorway pierces the blank wall facing the stream. It stands ajar, and its rusty hinges creak with the age of centuries as the pilgrims push it open and pass within. The vaulted entrance is almost in darkness, only a faint shaft of light coming from the half-fallen screen of latticed cedarwood that leans across the inner opening. Through it one steps into another world, a world of tranquillity and forgetfulness, a haven from the stress and storm without—whose ruined beauty is rendered all the more striking by the sudden stillness of the place. It is the medersa El Sahridj, one of the famous religious colleges of Fez, within whose precincts, until a few years ago, no unbeliever might penetrate. Beneath its crumbling roof are still a few poor rooms, and doubtless some friend in the neighbouring mosque has told the weary pilgrims that here they would find shelter for the night. Like nearly all medersas, it consists of a deep rectangular courtyard surrounded by arcades or cloisters half hidden by carved wooden screens, above which are narrow corridors leading to the students' tiny rooms. Founded in



THE MEDERSA EL SAHRIDJ : THE CHAPEL

the fourteenth century (721 of the Hegira) by the Sultan Abou El Hassan Ali, El Sahridj, 'the School of the Fountain,' took its name from the canal carried by its builder from Bab Djedid (the New Gate) to the mosque of El Andalous, to which the medersa was attached. This canal still supplies water to the small bubbling fountain before the entrance archway of the courtyard, from which a marble gutter carries it to the central basin. In the growing darkness only the upper part of the grey walls with their peeling plaster and carved cedarwood beams stands out with distinctness. Beneath is a sea of shadow, broken by glints of light where the fountain's trickling stream moves the black surface of the water, or where the green and yellow of the mosaic pavement bursts into fitful glow, as if an emerald set in gold had dropped upon it from heaven. At the further end of the courtyard something else is visible ; a great black archway framed in white, and in the midst of the blackness a tiny flickering light, beneath which grey figures sit motionless. The pilgrims have reached another holy place, for this is the chapel of the medersa, a lofty, whitewashed room, roofed with cedar beams and spread with matting. Its high opening, whose simple lines are but enhanced by the richness of the stalactite stucco-work, looks across the intervening water to where the entrance archway, still intact and perfect, seems to mourn the tottering wooden screen that has been spared by time but conquered by neglect.

Small wonder that the courtyard of El Sahridj is considered one of the gems of Fez. A place of contemplation and repose, in which the pilgrims, silent beneath the mosque lamp, may think the deep thoughts of men of little learning but much faith. And when the silence has become too great, a voice is heard chanting words of comfort in the distance. Glory to God, Master of the World ! There is no loneliness in the night, for the Companions of the Sick keep watch over the city, and but five hours remain before the dawn.

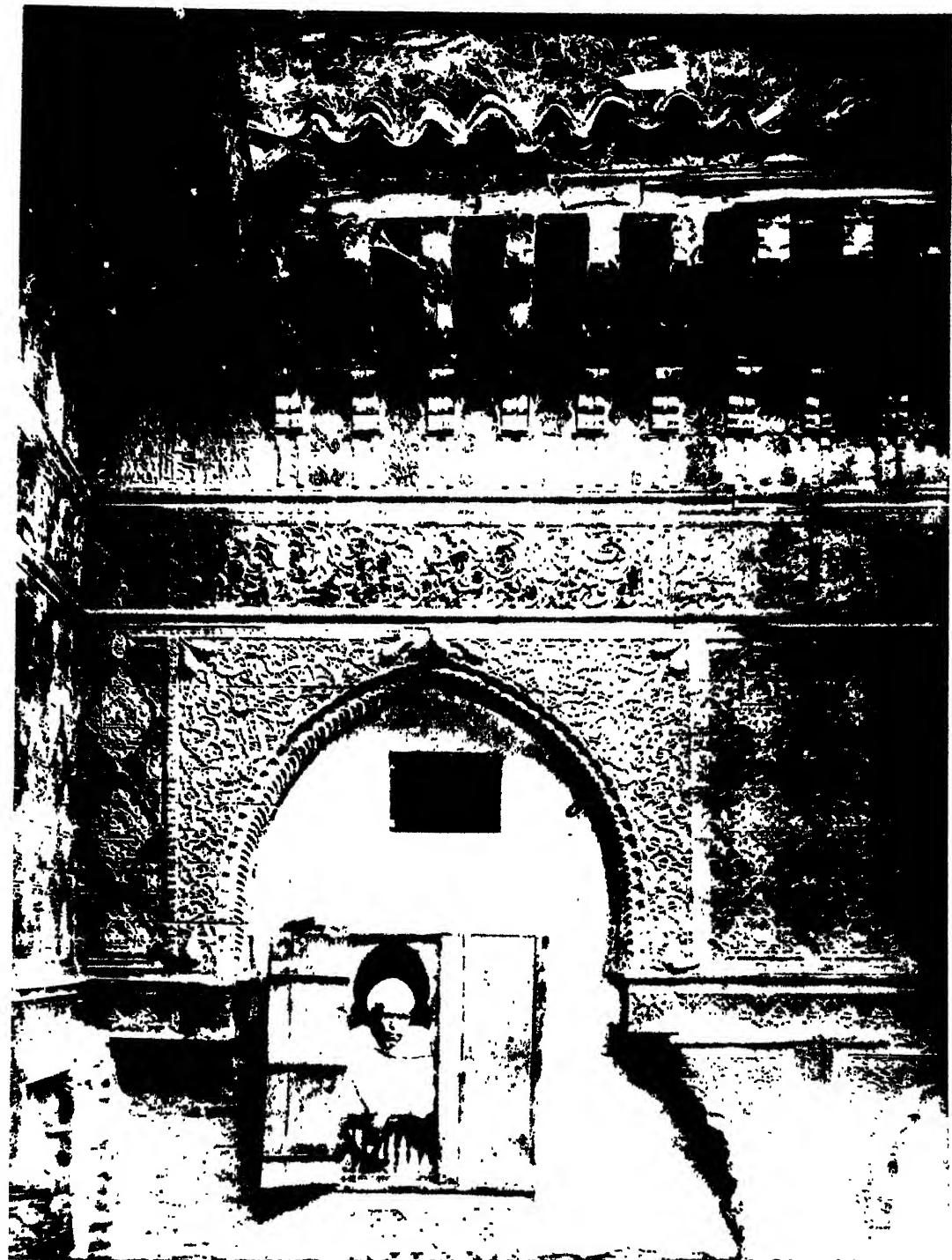
CHAPTER IV

CLOCKS AND MAGIC*

I FEAR that in the foregoing chapter I have dismissed the clocks of Mouley Idris with scant ceremony. I apologise for such want of respect towards the Saint, and to the clocks of Fez in general, for they are worthy of more than a passing word. There is also the famous clock of Abou Inan Farés—the so-called House of the Magician—awaiting an explanation if I can find a satisfactory one. So I will ask the reader to devote a few moments to the question of time, for though in Morocco the days need no counting, time has another and unexpected importance.

Throughout Islam the determination of the appointed moment for praying has a great influence on the efficacy of the prayer. This is not a dissertation upon religious questions, so there is no necessity to enter further into the matter. The important point is that, admitting the necessity for exactitude, the need for some means of knowing the time at once becomes apparent. Now sundials, which were the earliest instruments employed for marking the hours in the mosques of Fez, and of which a number still exist, had the great disadvantage of only working during the day and in sunshine. Another timekeeper had to be found, and for centuries various kinds of clepsydras and clocks of complicated mechanism have been in

* For much information concerning the clocks of Fez, and especially the clock of Abou Inan, I am indebted to M. Alfred Bel, who has kindly permitted me to quote from his most interesting articles on 'Les Inscriptions Arabes de Fès' in the *Journal Asiatique*.



THE MEDERSA EL SAHRIDJ : WINDOW OF A STUDENT'S ROOM

use. From the old records it appears that these machines were particularly numerous in Fez, and especially in the mosque of El Karouiyin. A certain Ali Bey who visited the city at the beginning of the last century tells us that in a fine house close to the mosque of Mouley Idris he saw a great collection of clocks, and adds that he was actually employed to regulate the numerous clocks of the *zaouia* and set them to the canonical hour of prayer.* I have no precise information concerning Ali Bey, but at all events he was lucky in his employment. I wish that I too could regulate the clocks of Mouley Idris and examine their ancient works, pausing by each dial to find the maker and the date, or to search within the dusty case for the key that will make the wheels whirr and perhaps even ring the chimes, while the sun and the moon rise and wane in their little enamel windows. What wonderful secrets the clocks must know ! What tales of the French Court could be squeaked out by that gilded fellow in the corner with his fat cupids that have no business here. What disdain of Fez after Versailles ! Perhaps this big one of simple mahogany and brass, was journeying from Plymouth to New York in some stout merchantman when the Sallee pirates seized the ship with its crew and passengers. Aye, there were women on board, and children too ; and the Moors laughed when they wept, and took them as slaves.

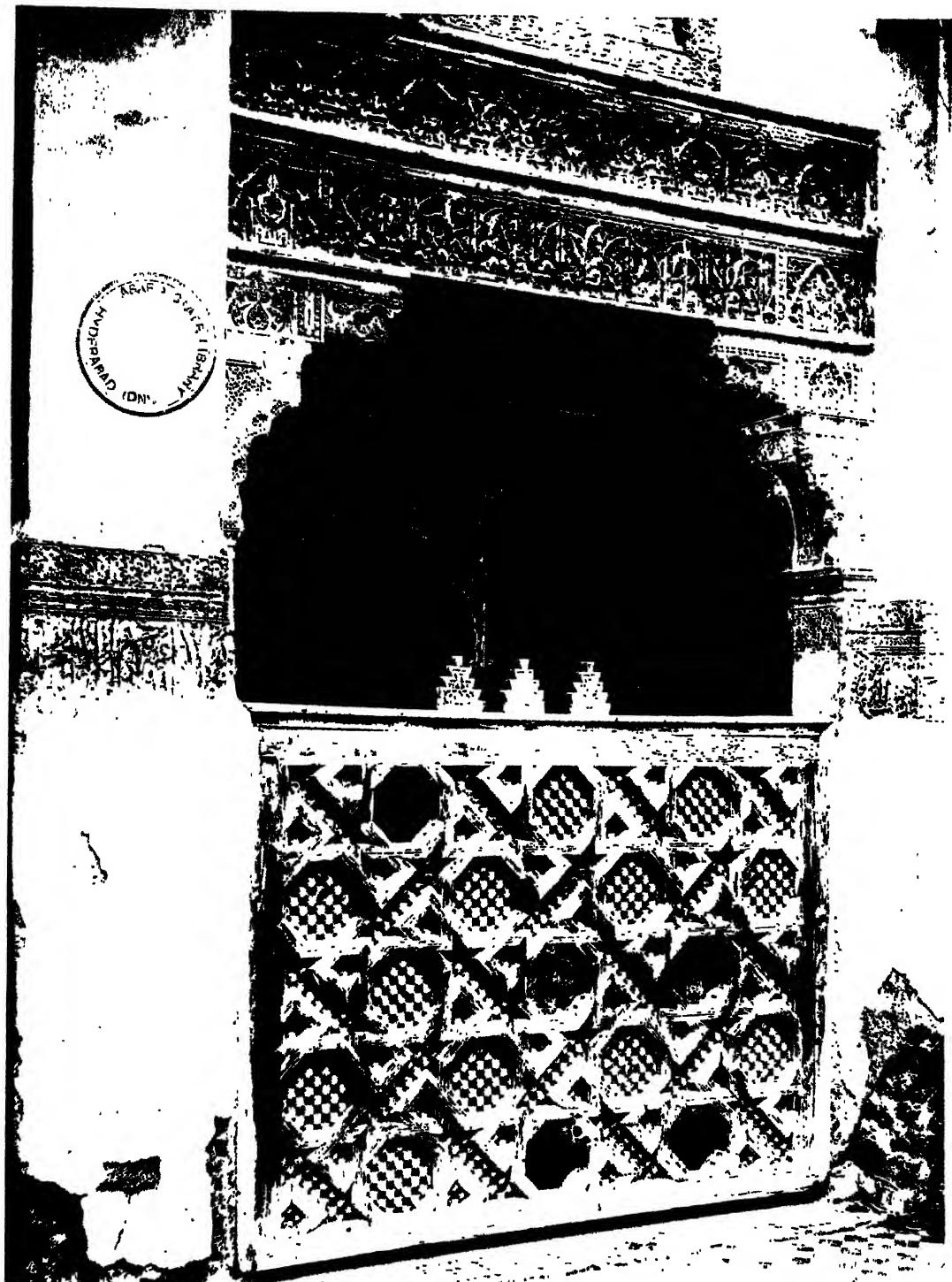
The visit of the mechanically minded Ali Bey was badly needed, for apparently he found the clocks in a most unsatisfactory state. In his description of the mosque of El Karouiyin he remarks that 'the priests have there very bad clocks in the tower for regulating the hours of prayer. The two small sundials on the terrace used for marking mid-day are so wrongly placed that they show the hour

* Captain Braithwaite, whose accounts are otherwise wonderfully exact, says in his *Journal* (1729) that the Moors ' have neither Bells, Clocks or Dials.' He mentions that all the other mosques got their time from the ' Marabou of the greatest Mosque,' but does not seem to have enquired how it was calculated.

five minutes too soon.' The terrace he refers to is, of course, the flat open space surrounding the cupola on the top of the minaret. He goes on to say that 'in Karouiyin two *mangana*,*' or clocks, were constructed by Abou Inan. Of one of them only the doors remain ; the other, dated 1348, still exists, but does not work, having lost its accessories.' This clock was a regular clepsydra, or clock worked by water running from a higher into a lower vessel. In the lower vessel was a floater in connection with an indicator of the hours marked on the exterior of the cedarwood clock-case. More complicated machinery was added several years later, and some Fasis declare that the cedarwood case with *thirteen windows*—the same number as in the clock of Abou Inan—is still to be seen in the minaret of Karouiyin. This clock was built by a man called El Habbak, a native of Tlemcen, which at that time belonged to the Empire of Morocco, but is now just across the Algerian frontier. In artistic treasures Tlemcen was a close competitor with Fez, for it possessed several mosques, all built by Merinide Emirs, and its medersa was among the most famous. It is also remarkable that the best clockmakers seem to have been natives of that town, which must have possessed some wonderful and complicated machines, if one may judge by the following partial description of one of them.

' Among the wonders of the palace of Abu Hammou, Sultan of Tlemcen,' relates the Abbé Bargès, a French scholar and Orientalist, ' was a clock ornamented with figures in solid silver. . . . Ten doors, introduced in the fore part of the clock, represented the ten hours of the night. At the end of each hour, one of these doors cracked and shook. Two wider and higher doors occupied the lateral extremities of the case, and when one of the smaller doors rattled,

* *Mangana*, or its deformation *magana*, is the Arabic word meaning a clepsydra or water-clock. It is now commonly used in Fez to denote any watch or clock.



THE MEDERSA EL SAHRIDJ

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an eagle swooped out of each of the bigger ones and settled on a copper vase or basin placed in front of the machine, dropping into it a piece of metal—also copper—which it carried in its beak. These weights, gliding into a cavity introduced at the bottom of the vase, fell into the interior of the clock, subsequently rising again when required. The clock was named in Arabic *manganah*, and was first seen in 1358.'

Doors rattling and eagles swooping ! What a triumph for the wild Northern Africa of the fourteenth century ! Yet these were by no means all the complications, for the above is only part of the description of the clock. We may show marvellous precision and reliability in our timepieces of to-day, but I cannot help feeling that the *art* of clockmaking is no longer ours ; and when I look up at the plain, unadorned timepiece ticking above the fireplace with smug precision, but with no hidden marvels to make one long for the beginning or the end of an hour, I wonder what the Sultan Abu Hammou would have thought of it.

Two things intrigue me in the Abbé Bargès' account. What was the motive power of the clock ? The Abbé is silent on the subject. Water is a possible answer, though in view of the complicated nature of the machine—much more complicated than Haroun-Ar-Rachid's clock mentioned below—it seems an improbable one. True, the *mangana* was originally a clepsydra or water-clock, but it soon came to have a much wider significance. Nor do the records of Fez help us, for the writers on its clocks, though they dwell on the wonderful things that happened, omit to tell us what 'made the wheels go round.' Another point. Why are only ten hours of night mentioned ? Was daytime of so little importance in Tlemcen that it need not be counted ? In any case, if the night was supposed to have but ten hours, then the day must be reckoned as containing fourteen, a fact to be remembered when we come to examine the

clock of Abou Inan at Fez. But there were complicated Arab clocks further back than 1358, for in A.D. 809 we hear that Haroun-Ar-Rachid, the celebrated Caliph of Baghdad and contemporary of the first Idris, sent an embassy to Charlemagne bearing presents, among which was a clock set in motion by water. At the completion of every hour a number of brass balls dropped upon a bell according to the hour marked, and gave the required sound.

So much for the Sultan of Tlemcen and Haroun-Ar-Rachid. Their clocks are certainly a digression, but they both have a bearing upon the clock of Abou Inan, which I am endeavouring to make the *pièce de résistance* of this chapter. They also help to show that the object of ancient Arab clocks was twofold, namely, to determine the exact hour of prayer in the mosques—Ali Bey speaks of the continual increase of large clocks in the mosques of Northern Africa—and to serve in palaces as mechanical toys for the amusement of princes. In Morocco, therefore, clocks do not merely keep time. They prove rather that time is an ornament of existence, and that if a good Moslem knows the hour of prayer, the days of Allah need no counting.

Up to the reign of Abou Inan Farés the call to prayer for the whole of Fez had come from El Karouiyin, the signal being given by a flag in the daytime and by a lamp at night. So long as only the old city of Fez El Bali was concerned, all went well; but with the construction of the new town on the edge of the plain above, difficulties arose, because the mosque of Fcz Djedid could not see the signal, though all others could. Such was the situation when Abou Inan built the Bouananiya in 1349.* He had good reason to be proud of his masterpiece. Was it not the largest and most sumptuous medersa in Fez? Was it not the only one with a *minbar* or pulpit for the Friday sermon—the only one with dependencies outside,

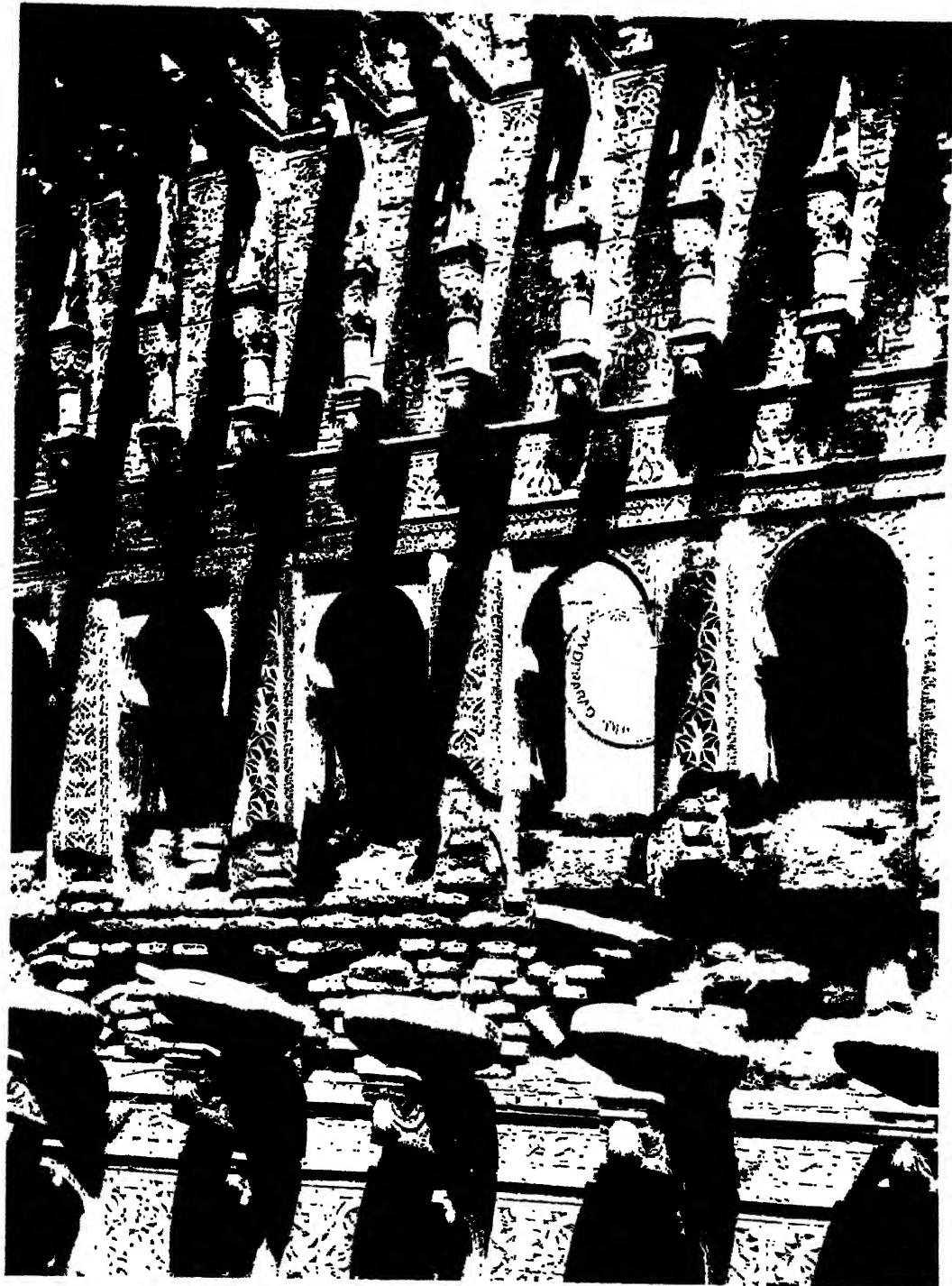
* The Bouananiya is described in the following chapter.

such as the Place of Ablution ? It even possessed a special school of the Koran on its southern side, which to-day still serves the same purpose, and, unique glory among medersas, it could boast of a minaret. With so many points in its favour, it is hardly surprising that the Sultan should have wished to transfer the prayer signal to his beautiful new mosque medersa, from which it would be visible everywhere. But even in those good old days Sultans could not have everything their own way, and one can readily picture the quarrel that ensued between the *oulema* of Karouiyin, jealous of their ancient prerogatives, and the royal builder. The medersa certainly had a minaret visible throughout the city, but Karouiyin held the clocks—bad ones when Ali Bey examined them four and a half centuries later, but at that time probably in good working order, one of them having been presented by Abou Inan himself only a few years before. A way out of the difficulty had to be found, and the Sultan found it by ordering the construction of a clock without its equal in all Morocco.

The House of the Magician, whose acquaintance the reader has already made, is what remains to-day of this famous machine, surely one of the strangest devices in existence for marking the hours. M. Alfred Bel, writing on the Arab inscriptions of Fez,* gives the following description of it. 'On the opposite side of the street on the north of the medersa (the Talaa), is a ruined building which also formed part of the establishment. It is known as the *magana*, or mechanical clock, and its thirteen bronze bells, like flat basins placed upon carved wooden brackets, may be seen from the street. Several metres above them are the carved supports of a fairly broad, projecting roof or penthouse, to-day completely vanished, which was probably continued to the other side of the street on a massive arch supporting a passage from the medersa to the clock-house.

* *Le Journal Asiatique*, November-December 1918.

Pointed windows pierce the wall slightly above and exactly behind each bell, and there is another row of smaller square windows above the broad, projecting roof. These are protected in their turn by a narrow penthouse of green tiles, and a third and final row of windows comes just beneath the roof.' There is one detail in which M. Bel is mistaken. The pointed windows are not exactly behind each bell, but between them. The photograph proves this conclusively. But to continue the description. 'With these remains to guide us, it is easy to imagine that each bell was struck by a metal weight let down at the end of a cord passing through the supports of the broad, projecting roof, and the fact that the outer ends of the beams immediately above the bells are pierced by a hole, while the others are not, lends colour to the theory. The weight carrying cords would be set in motion by clockwork from the interior of the house, and they seem to have been protected by wooden casing, of which traces are visible on the interior walls between and under the windows. The two upper rows of windows were most probably part of the ornamental scheme, having no connection with the machinery beneath them.' The best Arabic text describing the clock is a short passage in a book on Fez by Abou El Hassan Ali Jaznai, in which he says : 'Abou Inan—may Allah show mercy to him—ordered the construction of a *magana* adorned with bronze cups and bowls. It stood opposite his new medersa in the Souk El Kasr of Fez. To mark each hour, a weight fell into one of the bowls and a window opened. May 6th, 1357 (758 of the Hegira).' The opening of a window sounds like an additional attraction which would present no great difficulties ; but the date is interesting, for it proves that the clock was built two years after the completion of the medersa in 1355, and confirms the Sultan's desire to transfer to it the Karouiyin prayer signal. Did he succeed in his attempt to dislodge custom and prerogative from their stronghold in Fez El



FACADE OF THE CLOCK OF ABOU INAN

Bali? I admit that my sources of information have failed to give an answer to the question, and it remains in the mysterious uncertainty that shrouds so many things in Morocco.

There is no lack of legends to help out the scarcity of facts concerning the fate of the clock. Though the inhabitants of Fez ignore how it worked and why and when it ceased working, they are always ready with a tale of some sort. Here is one of the most popular. When the bells rang the noise was very great. One day a Jewess who was about to become a mother passed that way for the first time. As she came near the clock the bells began to ring very suddenly and loudly, with disastrous consequences so far as the baby's birth was concerned. Now the woman's husband was a Jewish doctor and sorcerer, for in those days the two professions were generally combined. He took vengeance by casting a spell upon the machine which silenced its bells for ever. M. Ricard, an authority on the ancient monuments of Fez, made enquiries on the subject among the Jews of the Mellah, and discovered the interesting fact that the clock occupies the exact site of the house of a certain famous Rabbi named Sidi Mimoun, who lived there in the twelfth century. As the Jews were not restricted to the Mellah till over a hundred years later, and as the clock was not built till 1357, there is no clashing of dates and no reason to doubt this information.

Now the transition from these simple facts to the tale given above, or to others still more wonderful, is easy. Soon we hear that a Jewish sorcerer actually owned the machine and rang its bells from the town of Mequinez, thirty miles away, till they were silenced by another Jewish sorcerer of superior power. A Jew is always the moving spirit. After all, there may be something in it. Perhaps one day a Jew did go along the street when neglect and old age had already made the pulleys creak and the weights hesitate. He looked up with a scowl at the *magana* of the hated Moslems, and passed on his way.

Next day the poor old machine broke down altogether. “ *Allah kerim*,” cried the seller of candles and spices opposite. “ I saw a Jew turn the Evil Eye upon it yesterday. The son of a burnt mother ! May Sheitan take him ! ” Thus the spell was cast, and the clock never went again. It is all very simple, and also very charming, because the legends of history are its only really satisfying ingredients. Over battles and treaties the historians are free to dispute as they please, but concerning legend they cannot but agree, and are forced to hand it down with secret respect at the end of their pens.

The critical may protest that all these legends lead nowhere, and that the question of what made the clock go and why it stopped still confronts us. So it does, and I will continue the game by asking another riddle. Why should there be thirteen bells on the façade of the clock-house ? Sir Martin Conway in his book, *Palestine and Morocco*, apparently thought that they formed part of a decorative scheme extending to the opposite side of the street—a sort of fore-court of the medersa—but there is no evidence in support of this theory. None of the authorities on the ancient buildings of Fez can offer any explanation of the unlucky number, and it is therefore with trepidation that I advance the following idea. If, as the Arab text assures us, a weight fell into one of the bowls to mark each hour, then the total of counted hours must have been thirteen. As the clock-house would only be visible during the daytime, and as from nightfall till daybreak there are no obligatory calls to prayer, one is likewise led to the conclusion that the machine only worked during the day, just as the Sultan of Tlemcen’s clock, which was a toy with no religious obligations, only marked the ten hours of night. According to the *Treatise on the Astronomical Instruments of the Arabs*, written by the same Abou El Hassan Ali, I found that the greatest length of the solar day in the latitude of *Southern* Morocco, was between thirteen and fourteen hours. May we take it, then, that



ES SEFFARIN

thirteen complete hours was considered the approximate time to be accounted for in Fez? I feel that the explanation is inadequate, but it points in a new direction.

So ends the story of the clock of Abou Inan. If it makes the traveller pause to look up at the thirteen bells on their carved cedar brackets before passing down the sunflecked Talaa, it will at least have served some purpose.

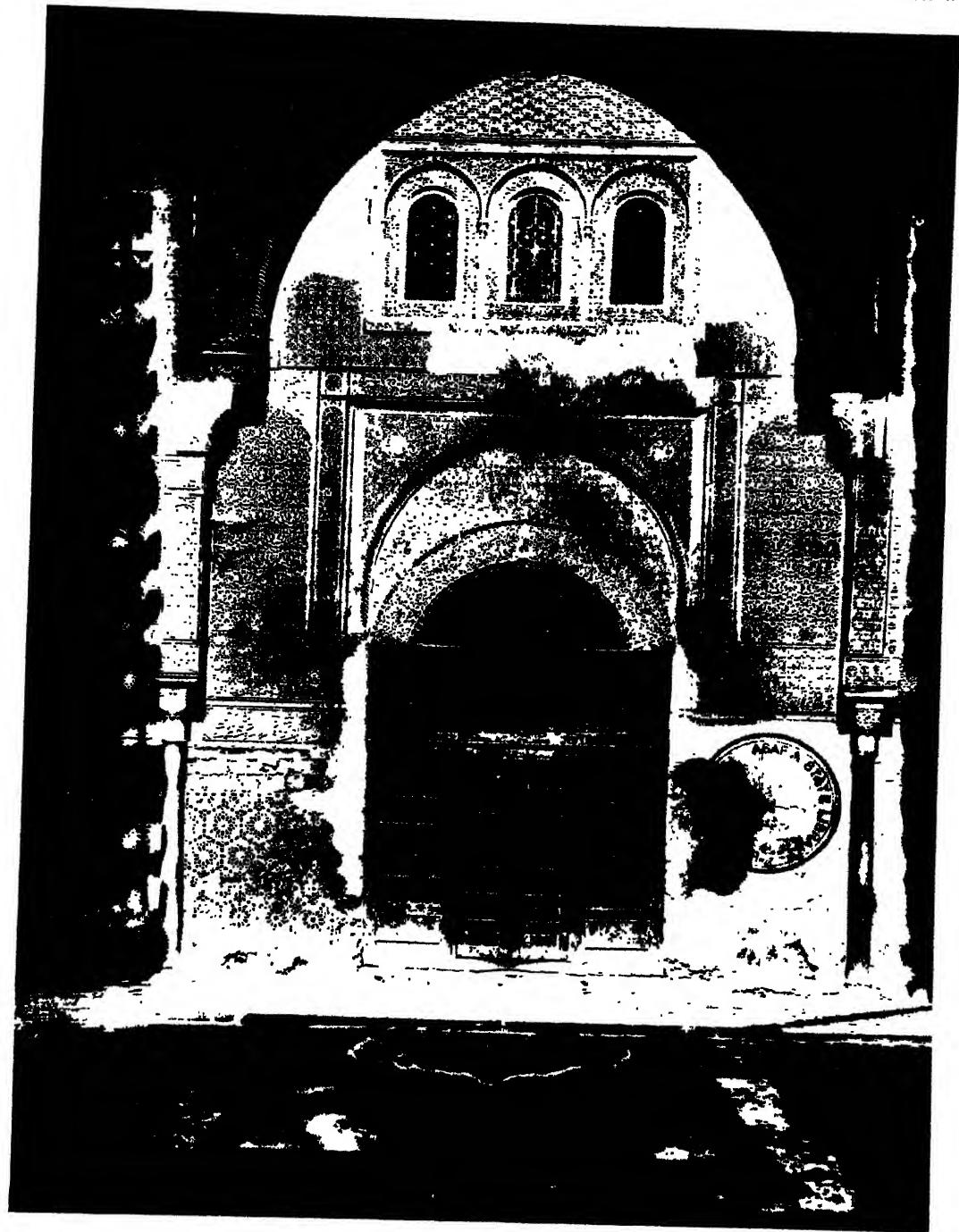
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The transition from clocks to magic needs no explanation. In fact, the process can hardly be called transition, for magic is everywhere in Morocco, even in clocks, as we have just seen. The Jew cast a spell, in other words turned the Evil Eye—the commonest of all forms of magic—upon the clock. Now the Evil Eye is a power which has given rise to many strange customs. Take, for instance, the bread marked in the form of a cross before eating, mentioned in the first chapter of this book. The marks have nothing to do with the Christian sign of the Cross, though they happen to take that form. They simply represent the human hand, the most universal means of protection against the Evil Eye.

The gesture of the hand* is of very remote origin, much older than Moslem or even Jewish times, and is to be found in all southern countries as a guard against the Evil Eye and other sinister influences. Hand amulets of various forms have been found in Etruscan tombs, and I have an idea that the hand is sometimes represented in Egyptian hieroglyphics. In the Moslem times with which we are concerned the usual form is a more or less rough representation of the hand, either drawn, or worked in metal as an amulet, or (more rarely) woven in carpets and embroideries. Travellers in any Arab country must have noticed the imprint of a hand, in red or black, repeated on walls and doorways, and the little silver hands sold

* Much of the following information is derived from the works of Dr. Edward Westermarck.

by native jewellers as brooches and pendants are familiar to everybody as the 'Hand of Fatima.' I do not know what legend is responsible for making Mohammed's daughter the owner of the hand. The *chorfa* or religious nobility of Morocco—those who may use the title of '*Mouley*'—consider themselves to be descended from Fatima, but they were not the originators of the tradition. It was simply the desire to attribute some beneficent power to a favourite historical personage that made the choice fall upon Fatima, and in dispelling the myth one is consoled by the certitude that the hand will continue to belong to the beautiful wife of Ali in spite of all proof to the contrary. A curious instance of the protective gesture is the large upright hand sculptured on the keystone of the outer Moorish arch of the great gate of the Alhambra called the Tower of Justice (La Torre de la Justicia), in defiance of the strict objection of Moslems to images representing the human body. Still commoner, however, are the designs where the actual representation of the hand is dispensed with and only the five fingers are indicated by five lines or dots. Sometimes the lines spring from a single stem, thus retaining some resemblance to a hand, but the arrangement more often employed consists of four marks of any kind with a fifth in the centre, in other words a cross. So the holes in the bread that so intrigued me that night at Mouley Idris were simply the Hand of Fatima to protect the feast from the Evil Eye, and—who knows—to guard the envoys of the *Caid* from the spells of the Infidel. It is very important that the sign should be made on the bread with the right and not the left hand, the latter being considered unclean. To sum up, we have the actual representation of the right hand, followed by the simpler lines or dots. Then five marks arranged in the form of a cross, of which examples are to be found in any Moroccan embroidery; and finally the number five in every possible combination. Five is the magic number on



EL ATTARIN : THE ENTRANCE

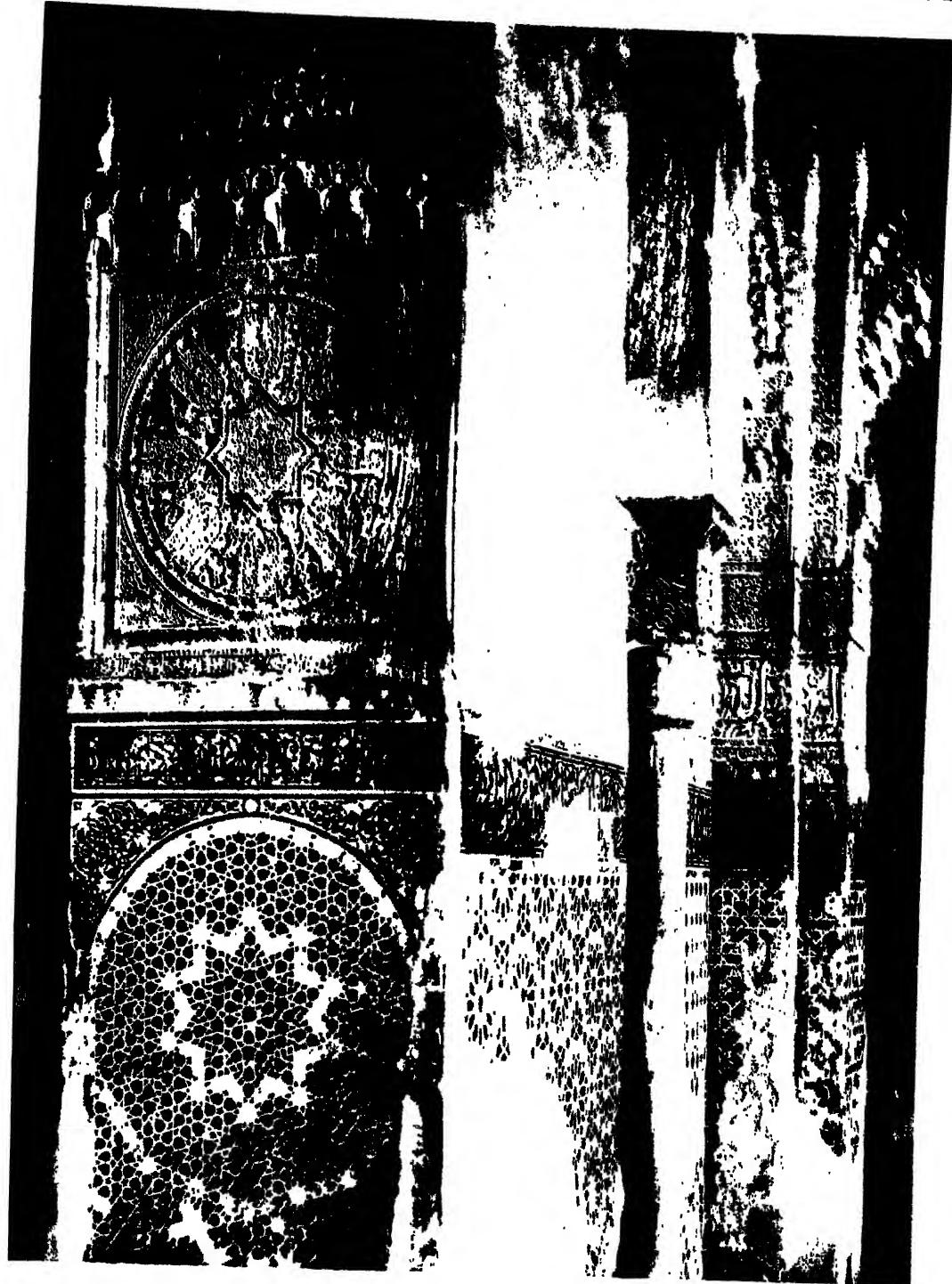
amulets. The fifth day of the week—Thursday—is considered especially lucky, and for that reason has always been the holiday of the ladies of the Imperial Harem. Even among the Jews the number five seems at one time to have had a peculiar significance, for the so-called Seal of Solomon consisted of a five-pointed star. With such an array of protective charms one naturally asks the question, 'What was this Evil Eye against which they were necessary?' Again we are taken back to the beginning of things. Volumes have been written on the subject, but so far as the inhabitants of Morocco are concerned, it is sufficient to know that there is magic efficacy in the look, and that, paradoxical though it may appear, the eye has a protective as well as an evil influence. Thus, besides the sign of the hand and the number five, an eye or a pair of eyes are used as a charm *against* the Evil Eye, and for that reason certain Berber tribes wear a cloak with an enormous eye woven on the back of it. On the other hand, the glance of evil eyes, such as those that are deep set, or with the eyebrows meeting over the bridge of the nose, is most dangerous. Even without these visible signs to give warning the Evil Eye may be exercising its power. The danger is ever present, and one cannot be too careful. It is bad to be looked upon while eating. The property of another should not be praised without a word of blessing, such as 'May it be productive of enjoyment,' to counteract the desire implied. When fruit trees are ripe, something conspicuous should be hung near them to attract the attention of passers-by and avert the Evil Eye. In all such cases it is good to make the protective gesture with the right hand and say, '*Hamsa ala ainak*,' 'five on your eye.' Sometimes the left hand may be used as well, as a sort of extra aid, and its gesture is known by the name of '*hamisa*' or 'little five,' clearly indicating its lesser importance.

There were also various protective amulets, which in certain cases resembled the evil thing against which they were used. In its very

early days the mosque of El Karouiyin possessed charms of this kind against rats, scorpions, and snakes. They were fixed on spikes above one of the cupolas of the mosque, and took the form of images of a rat, of a bird holding a scorpion's tail in its mouth, and of balls of copper—this last against serpents. The presence of serpents was particularly to be guarded against, for it was a form which the djinns or evil spirits were constantly assuming. The appearance of these amulets in El Karouiyin proves that Islam, which forbade the representation of any living thing, was forced for a time to allow the old Berber superstitions to have a place in the mosque. Such tolerance did not last long, however, and in the fourteenth century the amulets had already been removed.

Now these examples have been leading imperceptibly towards woman, the dominant factor in all magic and legend, the greatest weaver of spells since the first act of *Back to Methuselah*. Women are not only in danger from the Evil Eye like other people, but they themselves are considered a source of danger, and their eyes can exercise a most baneful influence upon men. This belief is not confined to any particular religion, and can be found in the legends of every country. Have we not Circe and the comrades of Ulysses? Did not Queen Guinevere bewitch Sir Launcelot? In Morocco the fear of a woman's eye is so great that at feasts they are often allowed to eat first in order to protect the men from the danger of their hungry glances. One can only hope that on such occasions the food is plentiful and the men in no hurry, otherwise an evil ending to the feast would seem inevitable.

To complete these notes on magic, that begin with bread and end with the eternal feminine—two of the three things which, according to the Persian poet, can turn the desert of life into paradise—a word about the veiling of women in Moslem countries may be of interest. There is no doubt that the custom is not altogether an



EL ATTARIN : PANELS OF STUCCO AND MOSAIC

affair of male jealousy, though such may be the declared reason. The women's own reluctance to show their faces to a stranger eloquently proclaims the real one, which is simply fear of the malevolent influence of some Evil Eye. No doubt human jealousy does enter into the question, but only to a small extent. How often have I surprised unveiled women drawing water at a well or engaged in some other occupation outside their houses ! They at once covered their faces, not through fear of their husband's anger, but in order to avoid drawing upon themselves a possibly dangerous glance. Needless to say these remarks do not apply to the modern ladies of Cairo and Constantinople, still less of Angora. In the whirl of revolution and self-determination, veils are soon thrown off, and the Evil Eye is confined to the representatives of foreign governments, against whom the Hand of Fatima would be waved in vain. But Morocco is a country which still preserves its dignity and its traditions, and in which spells may still be cast without causing laughter. And who shall say that spells are not needed ? Factories are here, and companies limited and unlimited. Power stations are building. Wireless has come, and there are aeroplanes in the air, and motors on the land. Quick then, the Hand of Fatima ! The Sign of Five ! The Eye ! to keep the good and counteract evil in the Empire of His Shereefian Majesty Mouley Youssef—may Allah make his reign profitable !

And if in the *bled** anyone should seek to test Omar's quatrain

Here with a loaf of bread beneath the bough,
A flask of wine, a book of verse—and thou
Beside me singing in the wilderness—
And wilderness is Paradise enow,

let him remember that there is still magic in Morocco. Mark the sign of five on the loaf with the right hand, and see to it that the lady's hunger is first appeased ; lest singing lead to no Paradise, but to the deepest Gehenna.

* *Bled* : contraction of *bilad*, meaning country.

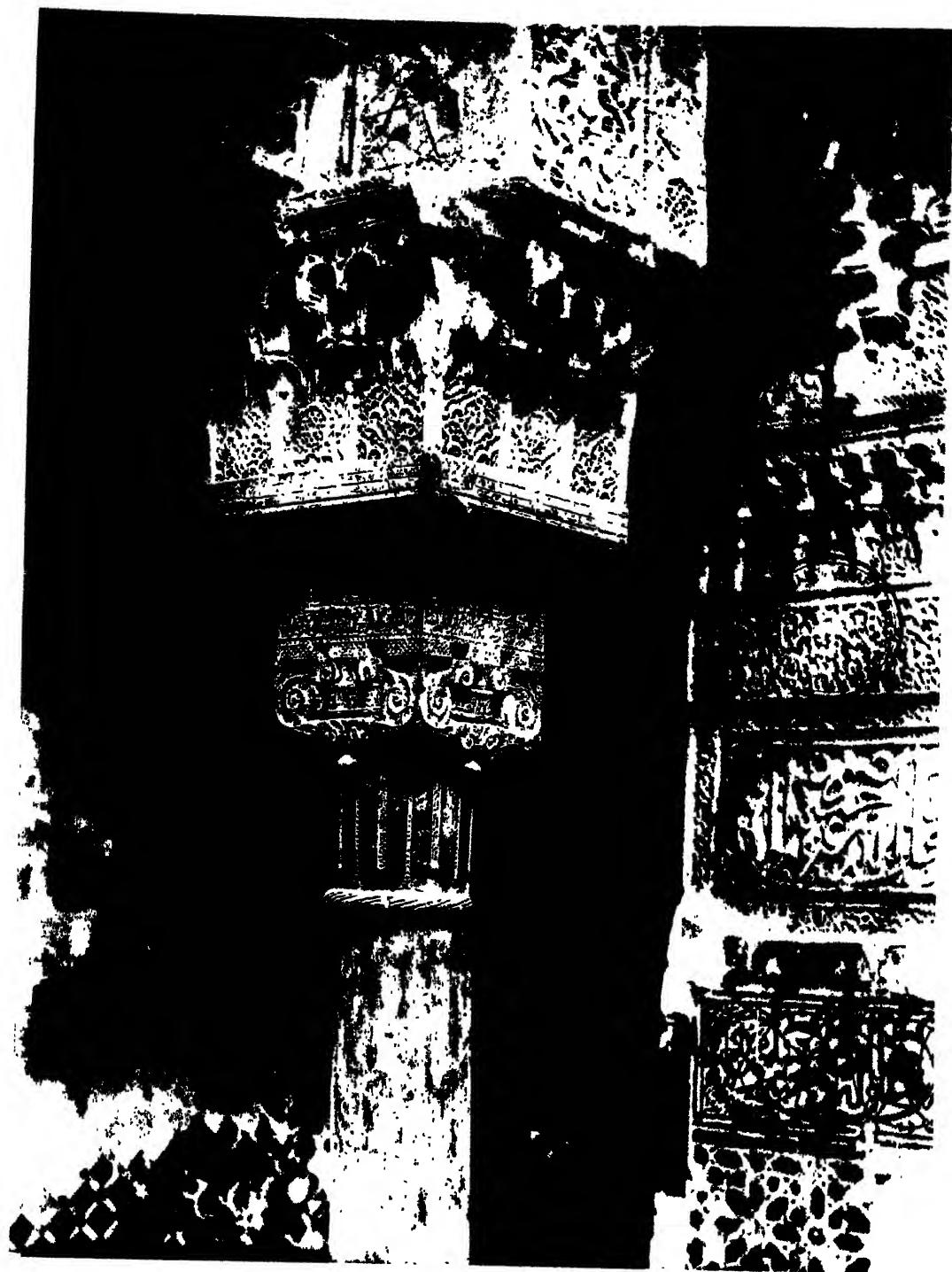
CHAPTER V

THE UNIVERSITY OF FEZ AND THE MEDERSAS

I HAD not been long in Fez when the Director of Fine Arts and Historical Monuments proposed that I should photograph the medersas. It may not be out of place to repeat here what I have already written in the preface to this book, namely, that without the help and advice of M. Tranchant de Lunel I should never have been able to spend several weeks in studying these most interesting monuments. As will be seen from the following description, difficulties were not wanting; and if danger was not actually present, there always existed the possibility that a *faux pas* on my part, or the action of some fanatic priest or student, might render further work impossible. Now, though I knew that the Arabic word *madresseh* means a school, and that a *medersa* is a building in which the *tholba** or students, are given food, lodging, and instruction—in other words a college—I was entirely ignorant of the part these colleges had played in the artistic history of Fez, and of the reason why they should be specially worth photographing. My enlightenment forms the subject of this chapter.

In conservative Moslem countries education means in the first place 'religious education,' the Koran forming the basis of all learning. All students may therefore be counted as theological

* *Tholba*: plural of Arabic *thaleb*, a pupil or student.



EL ATTARIN : A COLUMN

students, and their classes invariably take place within the precincts of a mosque. Where the wisdom of its teachers has become famous, the mosque gradually forms what we should term a university, drawing to itself pupils from far and near. By far the best known example of this is the great mosque of El Azhar at Cairo, the principal seat of learning of the East, which has about twelve hundred students, and under whose arcades everything deemed worthy of the name of science, or considered necessary to be known by Moslems is taught. In the case of the university of Fez, its growth was to a great extent due to the decline in Spain of Moslem power, which had reached its height in the reign of Abd El Moumen Ben Ali of the Almohade dynasty (1121-1163). The conquests of this Emir included the principal towns of northern Africa and of Moslem Spain, still held by his predecessors the Almoravids. Oran and Tlemcen, Marrakesh, Tangier and Algeceiras, Algiers and Constantine, Seville, Grenada, Badajos, and Toledo, fell successively into his power, forming the greatest Moslem Empire of the West that has ever existed. It was, however, of but short duration, for at the beginning of the thirteenth century it had already begun to crumble, and finally came to an end about 1230.

The Merinides, or Beni Merin, who succeeded the Almohades, came from that part of the Sahara extending to the west of Biskra, and of the various rulers of Morocco, theirs is the only name that has come to be well known in Europe, through the fine-fleeced sheep bred by their tribe and called 'merinos.' Probably few people are aware of the origin of the word. For a time the Merinides acted as allies of the Almohades, but turned against them at the first sign of their downfall, and by the middle of the thirteenth century succeeded in overthrowing them completely. Morocco owes to the Merinides the foundation of Fez Djedid, and to them are also due the medersas in the older part of the city, those marvels of Moorish

art whose beauty rivals that of the most famous monuments of Southern Spain. Under Merinide rule Fez reached the height of its magnificence, and became the fixed residence of the Emirs, who, seeing Spain gradually slip from their power, made every effort to reconstruct in Morocco the glories of Islam in Andalusia. In this they were not entirely successful, for though the numerous medersas they built attracted many students to Fez and added to the fame of its university, they were faced with the fact that whereas the upward trend of European learning was just beginning, Moslem education had already reached the highest point in its history, and was now destined to fall by slow degrees to the narrowness and intolerance of the present day. Thus, although many scholars of note professed in the mosque of El Karouiyin, they never attained the brilliancy of their predecessors in Spain.

Until the beginning of the Merinide dynasty no mention is made by Moroccan historians of the existence of medersas at Fez, but this does not imply that the city possessed no centre of learning prior to that date. For some time already men of letters had held classes both at El Karouiyin and El Andalous, but it was left to the Merinide sovereigns to complete, by the addition of the medersas, the university as it exists to-day. Before proceeding to a detailed description of these colleges, a few points common to them all may be mentioned. The medersas were intended for poor Mohammedan students from outside the town. Fasis, and those who had money, generally lived with their families, or in the fondaks which were always to be found in the vicinity of the medersas. There the young bloods enjoyed much greater liberty, and could amuse themselves with dancers and singers, in a manner impossible within the cloistered schools, where no feminine element was permitted to penetrate. In return they were expected to contribute towards the expenses of their poorer companions, an arrangement which shows

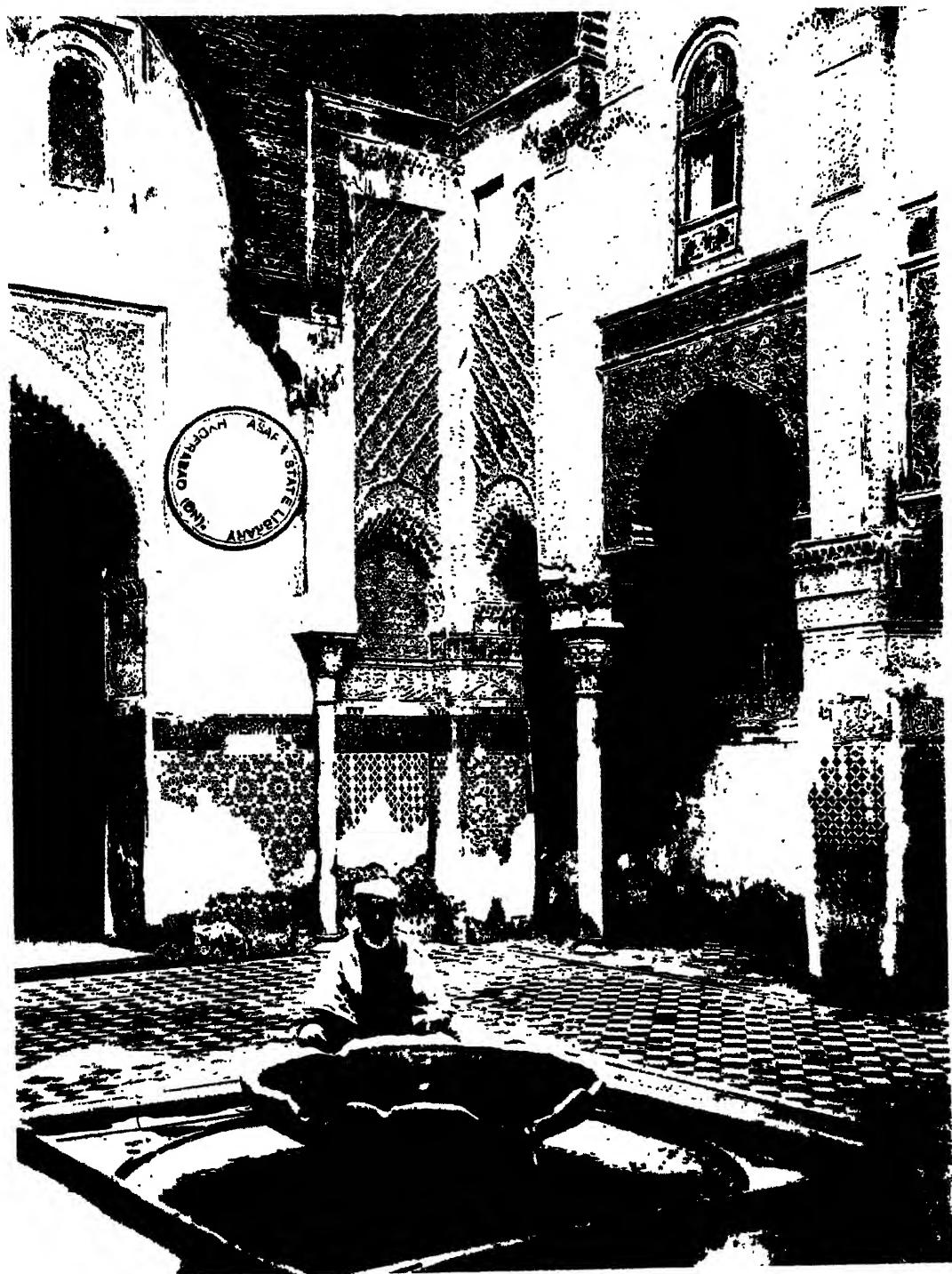


EL ATTARIN : THE CHANDELIER

that the life of a student in Fez was not such a very austere affair after all, and that the university authorities had business capacity even if they did not worry much about the care of the young. It appears that life in the fondaks was often very frivolous indeed, and one feels rather sorry for the poor students who had to live 'in' and be content with a daily ration of bread from the *Habous*. Fees for instruction have never existed, and in the old days one might remain ten years a student without being asked to leave; but now three years is the limit. The revenue necessary for the upkeep of the medersas was derived from shops and other property, presented to them by their royal builders. In the case of El Bouananiya, which stood on land almost outside the city, the shops were probably built at the same time as the medersa. Very often the shops mentioned in the inscriptions of foundation are still the property of the *Habous*. All medersas were constructed upon the same plan. With the exception of the very beautiful bronze doors, which nearly all possessed, there was little or no outward decoration. The interior consisted of a rectangular courtyard of varying size, surrounded by arcades or cloisters, above which were the students' rooms. Sometimes larger rooms for study and contemplation opened into the courtyard, but its eastern side was invariably occupied by a mosque, the equivalent of our college chapel, while a fountain or basin always stood in the centre. Medersas are by no means special to Fez, nor indeed to Morocco. Abou Youssef Yakoub El Mansour, the first Merinide Emir and builder of the medersa Es Seffarin, also constructed one at Marrakesh about the end of the thirteenth century. Another, at Sallee, was due to Abou El Hassan Ali in 1331, while Rabat also had its medersa, and Mequinez counts three or four, of which El Bouananiya (the work of Abou Inan Farés) is the finest. At one time Tlemcen in Algeria possessed no less than five, and in Persia the college of Sultan Hussein at Isfahan is famous.

At Fez the medersas, like all other religious edifices, were *horm*, that is to say that unbelievers might not enter them ; and so fanatical was the attitude of the population that, not many years ago, it was impossible for foreigners even to approach these holy places. This explains the fact that no writers have given an account of their beautiful courtyards.

Concerning the present accessibility of the medersas to Christians some explanation seems necessary. While preparing this chapter my attention was drawn to Sir Martin Conway's recent book *Palestine and Morocco*. In it he says, ' Even Christian students were admitted (to the medersas), and that is why the infidel traveller may enter medersas though he is excluded from mosques.' Knowing well that the medersas were *horm*, such a statement seemed to me very extraordinary, and, if wrong, most misleading in a book on Morocco by so distinguished an author. I therefore made every possible enquiry on the subject, and found no evidence whatever to support it. In none of the Arab texts concerning the city of Fez and its medersas, is there any mention of Christian students. In order to make doubly sure I consulted M. Alfred Bel, Director of the medersa of Tlemcen, and a distinguished Arab scholar and authority on Fez and its monuments. This is what he says : ' No text with which I am acquainted mentions Christian students in the medersas of Fez or anywhere else. It is true that in the fourteenth century, when the medersas were at the height of their glory in Northern Africa, Islam was very liberal in its ideas. Christians, merchants and soldiers, lived in the various Mohammedan capitals, and practised their religion freely, the one interdiction being the use of bells. The hatred of Christians only began at the end of the fourteenth and especially in the fifteenth century, when reasons, both political and mystical, brought about the foundation of fanatical religious sects. But in spite of this great tolerance, there could never



EL ATTARIN : THE COURTYARD

have been any abdication of the religious principles of Islam, and of the ideas which gave birth to the medersas. One must bear in mind that the Merinide sovereigns founded the medersas for the lodging of *Moslem* students,—future doctors of law, future officers of the State,—and would never have tolerated the presence of Christians in them. It would have been contrary to the spirit of the acts of foundation, which may still be seen engraved in marble on the walls of these colleges of Islamic science.'

The reason why the infidel traveller may now enter the medersas is a very different one. When the French Protectorate undertook the care of the historical monuments of Morocco, a sum of money was voted for that purpose. The medersas were mostly in ruins, and the *Habous* asked for aid towards their upkeep. The natural reply was that if money was to be spent, the French officials must at least be allowed to see the buildings concerned. Whereupon, in the Spring of 1914, an official visit was arranged, and Marshal Lyautey, M. Tranchant de Lunel, and a few others entered the medersas, until then forbidden ground to non-Moslems. My photographs, reproduced here, were taken a few weeks later, and constituted the first work of this description undertaken within these sacred colleges.* Time passed, and gradually the visits of privileged persons became more frequent, till lately an arrangement was come to by which permits are issued and the tourist is allowed to enter the courtyards, but not the chapels of the medersas. In that respect I was lucky, for I have spent hours in all the chapels, even wandering at will through the mosque of El Bouananiya. The fact is that although a medersa is sacred ground, it is not considered so sacred as a mosque; hence the one remains impenetrable while the other stretches a point, though I may say that it is a point strongly disapproved of by many Fasis. The continuance of the present

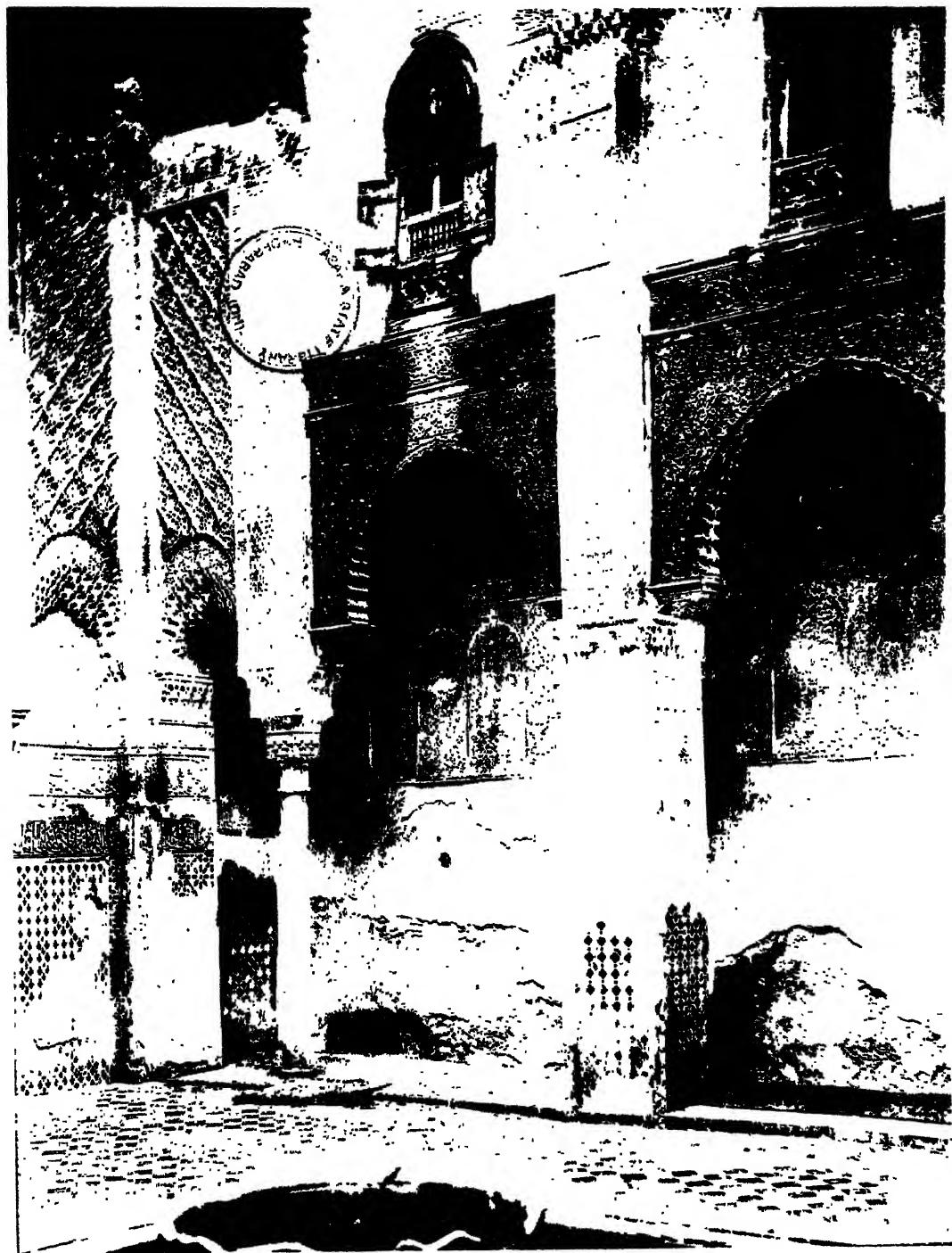
*It is now forbidden to take photographs in the medersas.

arrangement must depend to a great extent upon the attitude and behaviour of foreigners. A certain fanaticism will always exist on the one hand, while on the other, tactlessness is unfortunately only too common. My experience has been that a reverent bearing does much to smooth over religious difficulties.

There were altogether ten medersas in Fez. The following list gives them in chronological order with the approximate dates of their foundation and the names of their builders.

1. Es Seffarin	about 1270	Abou Youssef Yakoub El Mansour	MERINIDES
2. El Attarin			
3. El Mesbahiya	about 1321	Abou El Hassan Ali	
4. Es Sahridj			
5. Es Sebbain (in reality an annexe of Es Sahridj)			
6. El Mechouar (in the government buildings, or Dar El Makhzen, at Fez Djedid)	about 1321	ditto	
7. Abou Inan (Bouananiya)	1349	Abou Inan Farés	
8. Es Cheratin	1670	Mouley Er Rachid	ALAOUDS
9. Medersa Bab El Gisa	1760	Sidi Mohammed Bcn Abdullah	
10. Medersa El Oued (at Fez Djedid)	1795	Mouley Suleiman	

Four may be dismissed in a few words. *Medersa El Mechouar*. In consequence of enlargements made by the Sultan Mouley El



EL ATTARIN : IN THE COURTYARD

Hassan in 1886, this medersa became part of the government buildings and was abandoned by the *tholba*. It is, however, still used by the state engineers for classes of geometry and measurement.

Medersa El Oued. Of this medersa only the mosque remains. The school was done away with about 1886 on account of the turbulence of its students.

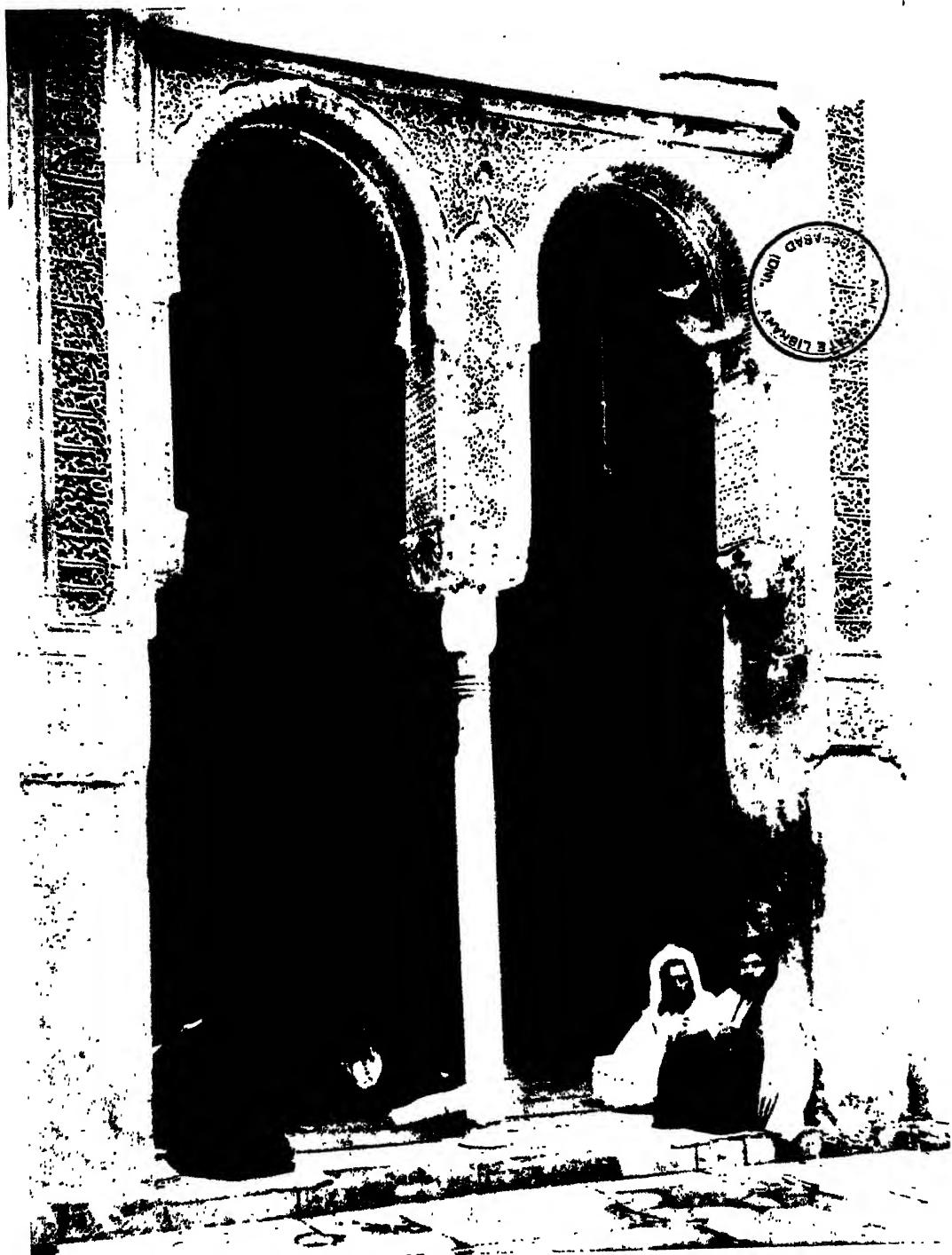
Medersa Bab El Gisa. The building still exists in a ruined condition, but has been abandoned for many years, and contains nothing of architectural or artistic interest.

Medersa Es Sebbain, an annexe of Es Sahridj, is now disaffected. It was called 'sebbain' because of the seven manners of reading the Koran which were taught in it.

Having gleaned the above preliminary knowledge from various sources, I started out early one June morning on the first of my numerous visits to the remaining six medersas. I was accompanied, as usual, by the soldier Ibrahim, whose assiduity often proved more of a hindrance than an aid, and whom I ended by openly encouraging to slumber in any shady corner. A boy of the illustrious name of Farés carried my camera and helped to put it up, which feat invariably attracted a crowd of enormous dimensions and varying amiability whenever it was performed in the streets of Fez. Making our way down the sun-flecked Talaa, past the fondak En Nejjarin and through the busy Kaiseria, we reached at last the dark *souk* of the coppersmiths, smoky and hot, and ringing with the clatter of many hammers. Half-naked figures, bent beneath their burdens like the dwarfs of Niebelheim, ran to and fro between the shops ; and instinctively one listened for the 'labour' motif of a Moroccan Alberich, or at least the crack of his whip, to rise out of the din. It seemed strange that anything so austere as a theological school should exist in the midst of such clamour, but perhaps the students of the oldest college in Fez drew inspiration from the

symphony of brass at their door, and found it easier to master the holy texts to the beat of the hammers. At that time it was simply 'the medersa' because no other school existed ; but later the name of Es Seffarin, or 'the Coppersmiths' (really meaning those who work the yellow copper, or *asfar* as it is called at Fez), was chosen to distinguish it from the other medersas.

Through a small doorway leading from the *souk* one enters an irregularly shaped courtyard about thirty feet square, surrounded on three sides by buildings whose doors and windows pierce the walls in the most unexpected places, while, higher up, parts of the original cornice and green-tiled roof protrude from under a house which has been planted upon them. Mosaic of green and yellow and black covers the floor of the courtyard and the rim of its rectangular basin of clear water ; and from a little patch of earth in a corner, a vine, perhaps as ancient as the medersa itself, has spread its branches over a rough wooden pergola, forming a crown of green and yellow that repeats the mosaic of the pavement and turns the water of the pool into a dancing mirror of colour. The archway of the chapel of medersa occupies the fourth side of the courtyard. It is very simple, with only slight stucco decoration on the upper part ; but above it are the remains of a projecting wooden roof, once covered with tiles, and very likely an early attempt at the superposed arcades to be found above many of the later gateways. A plain wooden screen with an opening in the centre fills the lower part of the archway, remnant perhaps of something more ornate, though it would seem that Es Seffarin never received much decoration. It had the simplicity and dignity of very early buildings. Completed about 1270 by Abou Youssef Yakoub El Mansour, it was not only the first medersa, but for a time possessed the only library in the capital. In the peace treaty concluded in 1274 with Don Sancho, King of Castille, the Emir stipulated that a large number of manuscripts



EL' MESBAHIYA : THE DOUBLE ARCH

which had fallen into the hands of the Christians at Seville and Cordova—exactly thirteen mule loads according to the *Roud El Qartas*—should be returned to the Moslems. The manuscripts duly reached Es Seffarin, but were eventually removed to the great mosque of El Karouiyin, and no medersa has since possessed a library.

If Es Seffarin is lacking in ornate decoration the same cannot be said of the next medersa I visited. The way to it lay through dark and narrow streets, filled with crowds of pale-faced Fasis whose glances grew more and more hostile as we approached our destination. But though the way was unpleasant the goal was worth it, for it was here that I stepped from the cold world of history into that fairyland of Moorish art where I was to pass so many interesting hours. The step was not taken without opposition on the part of the scent-makers of Fez, for as its name implies, El Attarin stands in the *souk* of perfumes and spices, whose people showed such open hostility that I was hard put to it to preserve a dignified or at least an indifferent attitude while Ibrahim explained my intentions to the authorities of the medersa. The enforced wait had one advantage. It gave me ample time to watch the crowd, and to remark upon the countenances of these Fasis the very combination of dignity and indifference which I was trying so hard to attain, with the addition—for my special benefit I suppose—of the most infinite scorn. I came to the conclusion that we Europeans have no idea how to look scornful: in fact, by over-cultivating a tolerance which kills expression, we are rapidly losing the power of *looking* anything in particular. The proof of this was all around me, and I was just beginning to enjoy an interesting lesson in physiognomy when Ibrahim returned triumphant. "Come at once," he said, and disappeared through a wonderful bronze-covered door on the opposite side of the street. I followed as quickly as possible, with, I fear,

but little dignity and no scorn at all, and found myself in total darkness as the door closed behind me and was carefully barred and bolted. A moment later, with the scraping of ancient hinges, another door opened, and then I understood why I had been encouraged to photograph the medersas.

The first impression made by the courtyard of the medersa El Attarin is hard to describe. No photograph can convey it. The doorway where I stood was in deep shadow, but the golden light of the afternoon sun struck full on the upper part of the wall opposite, changing the greyish white of the stucco almost to orange, and just reaching far enough downwards to penetrate the archway of the mosque and turn the great brass lamp within it to a ball of fire glowing in the darkness. The courtyard was small and well-like, certainly not more than twelve yards long, and in the cool shadow it was some moments before its details became apparent. Then I saw that the flooring was of tiles, in small squares of jade-green and yellow. In the centre a simple cup of white marble poured water from its broken edge into a square basin of blue mosaic, and its splash was the only sound to break the stillness. Along the walls on either side ran a shallow arcade, supporting the floor above, where the carved and shuttered windows of the students' tiny rooms opened over the centre of each arch. It was the minute and variegated work of these arcades that first revealed to me what El Attarin must have been at the height of its glory. The lower part of the walls was covered with many-coloured mosaic, ending in a line of green tiles with verses from the Koran in black running along their whole length. Above these came panels of worked stucco, whose bands of Cufic characters and geometrical patterns of infinite design filled every inch of space, till the dark cedar of the arches gave relief to their whiteness and repeated their splendour in the deeper carving of its beams. Before passing to other things a word may be said about



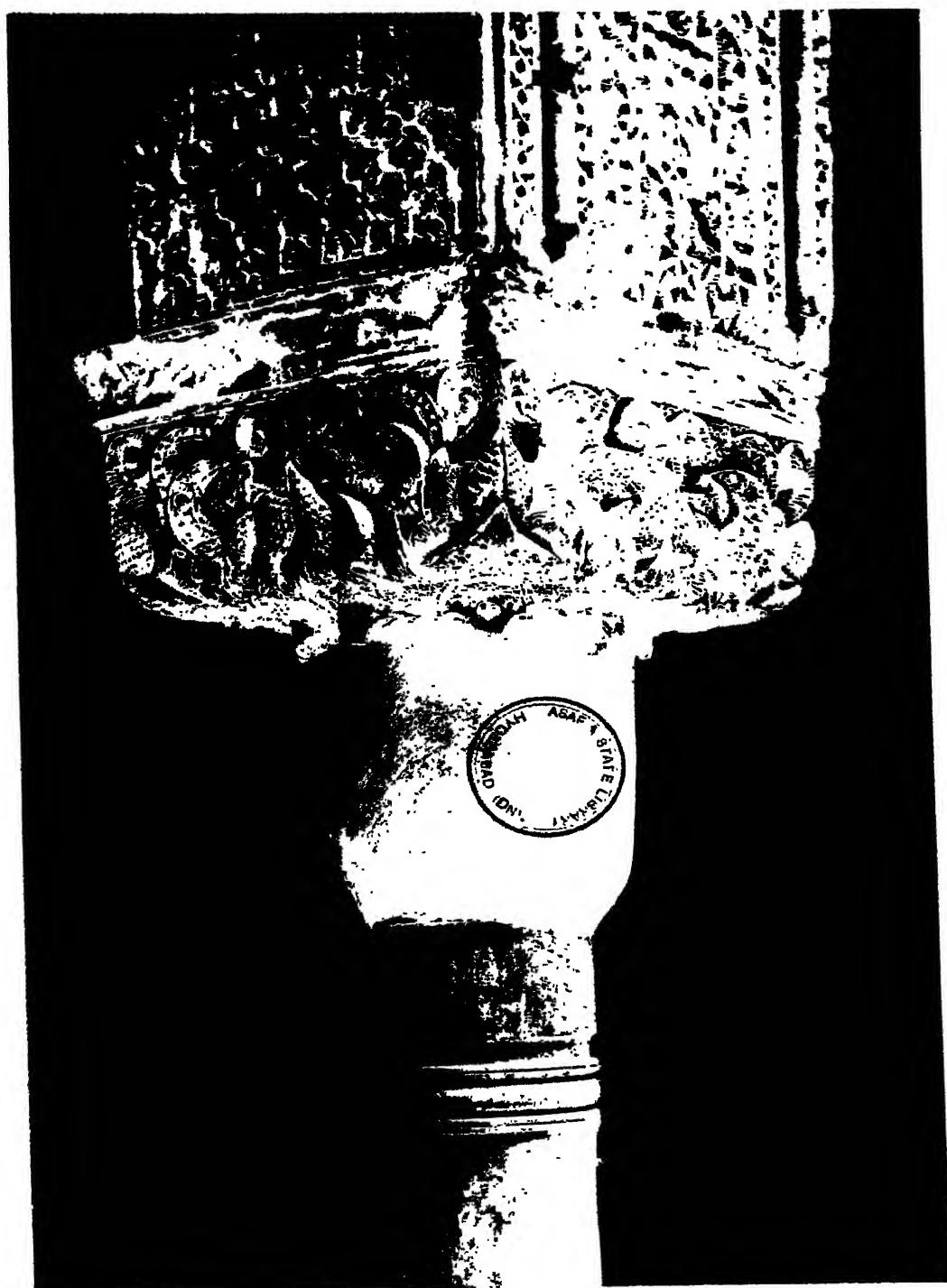
EL MESBAHIYA : ENTRANCE TO THE COURTYARD

this stucco-work, so universally employed to decorate Moorish buildings. Above the tiles and mosaic it covers walls, arcades, and arches with a diversity that seems endless. The patterns are seldom alike, though at first sight they may appear to be so, and when the impression of wonder has passed, one is irresistibly drawn to closer examination of the labyrinth of scrolls and bands and panels. The method of working is as simple as the results are complicated. The plaster, which is composed of a mixture of lime, hair, sand, plaster of Paris, and various cements, is applied directly upon the brick in a thickness of about an inch. No laths are used, and the composition is worked while it is fresh. The artist begins by transferring the main design to the plaster from a paper upon which it has been worked in red. He then traces a rapid sketch with a small knife, keeping the plaster wet the while by blowing water upon it from his mouth.* When the sketch is finished, he cuts out and deepens, to a varying extent, the parts between the lines of his drawing, beginning with the original pattern and gradually working in the minute and complicated background. (A particularly fine example of stucco panelling is shown in the description of the medersa Bouananiya.)

Apart from the perfection attained by the plaster work itself, the art with which the three principal elements of decoration—mosaic, plaster, and carved wood—were combined, cannot fail to arouse admiration. This is especially apparent in the photographs of El Attarin. The lace-like appearance of the stucco panel reproduced, which repeats in finer and lighter detail the design of the mosaic, and gives fresh vigour to the *motif* of the cedarwood arch springing from it, is proof of the genius that these old craftsmen had in them. At the same time one is forced to admit that, with all their decorative

* The details concerning plaster work are drawn from *Le Maroc d'aujourd'hui*, by Eugène Aubin.

skill, the Merinides were not really good builders. The courtyard of Attarin gives ample proof of this fact. It is evident that the original intention was to surround it with an arcade supported entirely by the slim marble columns, and that the square, stucco-covered pillars, with which they alternate, were only introduced when it was found that the weight of the building above would be too great. The illustration shows how admirably this miscalculation has been hidden in the general scheme of decoration. I thought it worth while to give a 'close up' of one of the columns with its shaft of white marble, and its somewhat plain capital, from which rise pierced plaster panels ending in superposed arcades of shell-like form. The real point of interest is the capital itself. This is of stone, and of very ancient design, totally different in workmanship from anything surrounding it. The lower part cannot fail to remind one of the open lotus capitals in some Egyptian temples, but the scroll-like work above it is of a form quite archaic in character, probably of Phœnician origin with added Arabic lettering. As regards the brass chandelier which I have mentioned as hanging in the chapel, M. A. Bel, writing in the *Journal Asiatique* (September–October 1918), says that it is a particularly fine piece of Arab metal-work, and mentions inscriptions, giving the name of the founder of the medersa, *which he could not decipher* because of the layers of dirt and oil covering them. This is unfortunate, for if M. Bel has relied on hearsay alone, it is possible that the inscriptions are simply complimentary phrases such as 'Happiness, prosperity, fulfilment of desire,' or religious texts like 'This is the Will of God, there is no power but in Allah,' and not the dedication of the founder, Abou Saïd Otman, in 1321. But even if the chandelier was not the gift of that prince, it cannot be later than the end of the fourteenth century. It is interesting to note how the dome-shaped form of Moroccan mosque chandeliers differs from anything in Egypt or



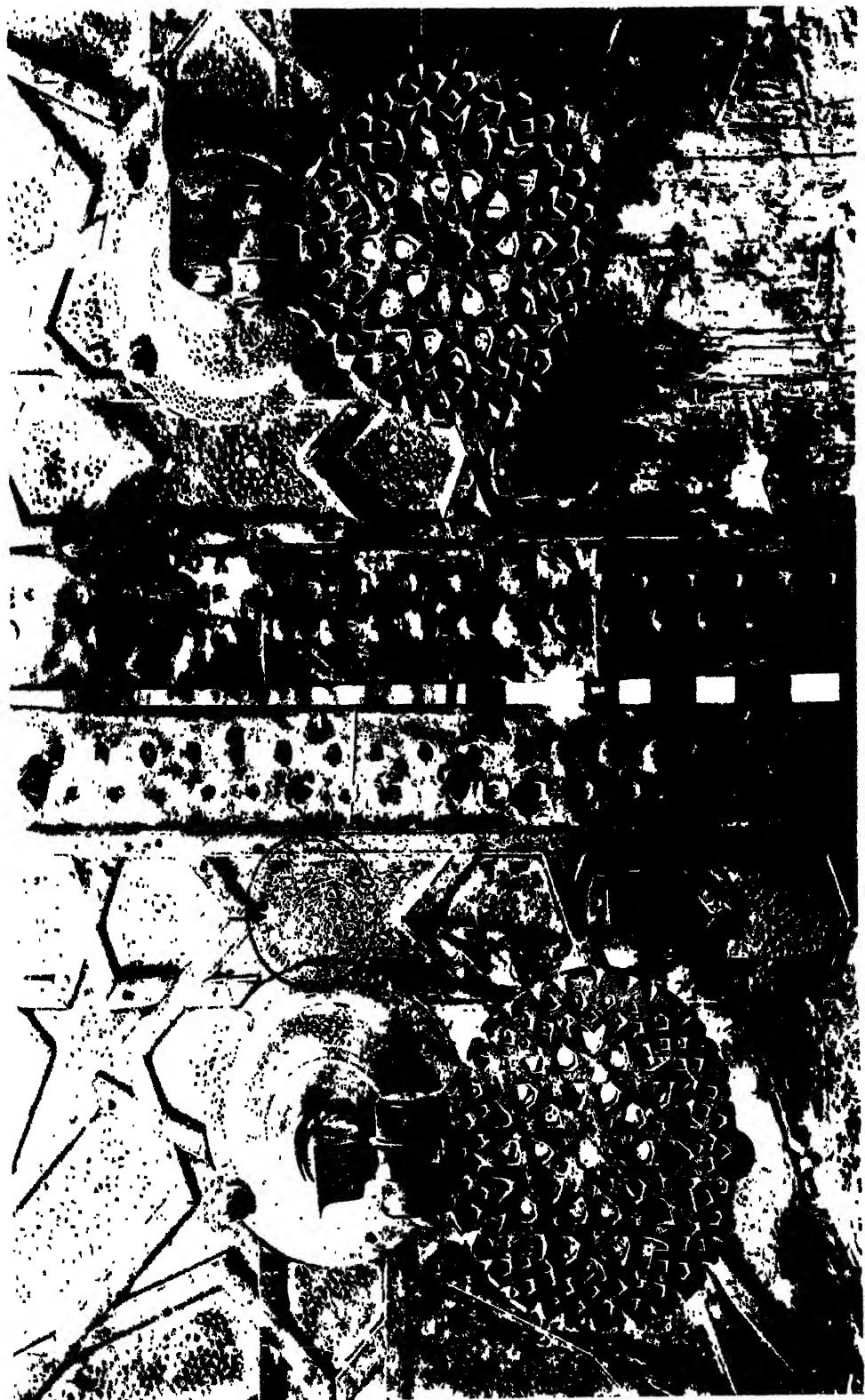
EL MESBAHIYA : THE CENTRAL COLUMN

the East. In the Arab Museum in Cairo nothing is to be found at all resembling it. The largest and perhaps, in point of decoration, the finest example, hangs in the Great Mosque of Taza. Few works of Moslem art have acquired greater fame, and its antiquity and artistic value are known and commented upon by every Moroccan sage, while even now the common folk never tire of singing its praises with that exaggeration which gives such charm to Arab tales. Were no other sources of information available, the literature of the country could supply us with every detail concerning this masterpiece, of which a full record was kept from the beginning. El Salaoui, author of the *Kitab El Istiqsa*, gives the following description : 'In the year 693 of the Hegira (A.D. 1294) the Sultan Youssef completed the Great Mosque of Taza. In it he hung a chandelier of pure copper, weighing thirty-two kantars (about 1½ tons) and fitted with 514 lights. The Sultan spent no less than 8,000 gold dinars (roughly £4,000) on the building of the mosque and the construction of the chandelier.' Another historical record, the *Roud El Qartas*, mentions it in very similar terms. 'In the year 693 the Emir Yakoub Youssef completed the building of the Great Mosque of Taza, and placed within it a chandelier whose weight was thirty-two kantars of copper, and the number of its lights 514. The sum spent was 8,000 gold dinars.'

Thus, for 630 years the chandelier has hung in the centre of the main transept of the mosque. It consists of an enormous cone of chased and pierced copper, eight feet in diameter and about five feet high, from the top of which rises a metal tube supporting a ball and a small lantern-shaped ornament, the whole being suspended from the roof by a heavy chain. In the interior of the cone is a dome-shaped space formed by sixteen curved panels of pierced copper, rising to a central point, while its exterior consists of ten circular steps about five inches in height, which diminish in size as they

approach the summit. These steps originally held the 514 lights mentioned by the Arab historians, but unfortunately the movable holders containing the oil lamps have disappeared, with the exception of one which was found broken on the lowest step. Gradually, neglect did its work, and now for quite a hundred years the glass wick-containers and candles have been placed directly on the steps, with the result that soon every detail of decoration disappeared beneath a thick layer of grease and dirt. In the end, however, this very dirt served a good purpose, for when the French Fine Arts Department undertook to spend a sum of money on restoring the interior of the mosque, it was stipulated that the chandelier should be taken down and cleaned, thus creating a unique opportunity for its examination. The work is superb. The artist has surpassed himself, and one can only regret that none of the records give his name. Besides engraving a very fine inscription recording the presentation of the chandelier in 694 of the Hegira (A.D. 1295), he has covered each step, and framed each panel, with verses from the Koran in rectangular Cufic lettering, through which twine leaves and flowers, interwoven with admirable art. On every surface, however small, imagination has been allowed to run riot, and nowhere has a design been repeated.

Has this step-like construction, with its domed interior, any particular significance ? M. Tranchant de Lunel, one of the rare and happy mortals who have entered the great mosque of El Karouiyin, thinks that the answer to the riddle is to be found in the twin chandeliers hanging within the doorway known as Bab El Koutoubiyin, opposite the *souk* of the booksellers. One of these is plainly visible from the street and appeared to present no special features, till examination showed it to consist of nothing less than a Christian church bell about two and a half feet high, to which the Moslems had added four step-like circular stages placed at



EL BOUANANIYA : THE KNOCKERS

equal distances from the base upwards, and fitted with spikes for holding candles. The two bells are identical and intact, and the records mention that at one time no less than ten of them hung in the mosque. They were brought from Andalusia by the Merinides, but those remaining bear no dates or inscriptions to give a further clue to their history. In his book, *The Moors in Spain*, Lane Poole says of the great mosque of Cordova that 'hundreds of brass lanterns made of Christian bells illumined it at night'; though surely bells were never made of brass. As the mosque of Cordova was completed with the proceeds of the sacking of Narbonne in A.D. 793, the provenance of the bells seems pretty clear, but to find such things in Fez is more surprising. They prove, in any case, that Christianity has had an unexpected and interesting influence upon the form of the mosque lamps of Western Islam. An idea of the value of such work may be formed from the fact that a copy of the chandelier of El Attarin now being made for the Exhibition of Decorative Art, to be held at Paris in 1925, will cost 7,000 francs, or about £100.

But to return to El Attarin; the *mihrab* in the chapel is particularly noticeable, on account of the two octagonal, black marble columns with yellow capitals, which stand on either side of it. Their form is rare, and although I have no proof in the matter, they most probably came from Tarragona or Almeria, where there were important quarries.

It was from the chapel that I took the photograph of the entrance side of the courtyard (Plate No. 19) showing the complete scheme of decoration, with its wonderful proportion and simplicity of line. The wooden screen is interesting. Such screens are a feature of all the medersas. Besides masking the doorway, they are often placed between the pillars of the cloisters surrounding the courtyards, as in El Mesbahiya, El Sahridj and El Bouananiya, which latter shows the best examples of this style of work. I was told that the screens

were originally painted, and was able to discover traces of colour on several of them. Painted wood was and still is a favourite form of decoration, and the painters have always been one of the most important guilds of Fez. For generations they belonged to the family of the Ouled-El-Qabbadj, and all their designs are executed from very ancient models, popularised by cuttings in paper. Another corporation which played an important part in the history of Moorish art is that of the mosaic-workers. To them, when the masons had carried out the plan, fell the task of decorating the whole of the lower part of the building, a most important item in the scheme, forming, as it did, the coloured base from which rose the dark-brown and white of cedarwood and stucco. They were also responsible for that invariable adjunct to any Moorish building, the fountain. Now, on looking at El Attarin, one's thoughts naturally turn to that best-known specimen of Moorish art in its final European development, the Alhambra of Grenada. Comparison of detail is inevitable, for in date the Alhambra and El Attarin are not very far apart, the former having been built between 1248 and 1354, and the latter in 1321. Both have been restored, but El Attarin possesses the immense advantage of having undergone the process only once. No vandal hands have ever touched it, and no Philip V of Spain has worked his will in its tiny courtyard.

It is said that Abou Saïd Otman, the founder of El Attarin, determined that it should surpass in magnificence every other building in Fez ; and if one may judge by what remains to-day, he certainly succeeded.

One point in its importance was that the highest Court official, Mezwar Abdullah Ben Qasim, was in charge of the work. Such an honour is explained by the fact that, as in the case of the other medersas, the intention of the Merinide sovereign was to encourage students from *outside*, who would later carry the religious science



EL BOUANANIYA : THE ENTRANCE WITH BRONZE DOORS

of Islam throughout the land. The plan was not very successful, and we know that in the Berber country learning only spread after descending to the level of the people through the mysticism of religious societies. Attarin was considered a marvel, not because of its size, but because of its beauty. Never had anything been built like it. M. Bel says, 'After studying the remains of the Merinide medersas at Fez, I share that opinion. None of the later medersas can equal the fineness of its decoration, the harmony of its proportions.'

According to the *Kitab El Istiqsa*, the sovereign, surrounded by the highest dignitaries and men of learning of the city, was present at its inauguration on the first of the month of Chaaban in the year 721 of the Hegira (A.D. 1321). In imagination the scene lives once more in the newly finished medersa, perfect in every detail, from the green tiles of its roof to the last cube of mosaic in the pavement, and from the web of creamy stucco, with its oft repeated scrolls of praise and thanksgiving, to the scented beams of freshly carved cedar. From the open door in the screened entrance a procession of richly robed sages moves slowly past the marble fountain in its turquoise basin. Under the arch behind them appears a figure robed in pure white. It is the Emir, come with all his Court to dedicate the most magnificent edifice in his capital ' to the glory of God and of Mohammed His Prophet ' ; and, facing the mosque with its twin black pillars that show where Mecca lies, ruler and courtiers join in the prayer of dedication. Suddenly someone looks round. There is a cry of " Infidel, Infidel ! " and priests and scholars rush to destroy the intruder. With a start I open my eyes to reality. It is almost dark and the courtyard of Attarin seems enveloped in purple mist. Ibrahim stands beside me. " The street is empty," he says. " If Allah wills, we can go in safety."

Outside the great mosque of El Karouiyin runs a particularly

deep and tunnel-like alley in which are three entrances to the courtyard. Just opposite one of these a bronze-covered doorway, that almost inevitable prelude to a medersa, leads to El Mesbahiya. It was the first inhabited medersa I had visited, and after my experience at El Attarin, I entered it with some misgiving. Difficulties with people outside were bad enough, but what would happen in a building full of fanatical students? Perhaps they would all be listening to some famous professor in the great mosque across the street; or possibly it was vacation time, if such a thing existed at the University of Fez. Thus I hoped and wondered, but in every respect I was wrong, for the students of El Mesbahiya solved the problem by taking no notice whatever of my activities till they discovered what I was doing with my strange looking machine. Then they simply disappeared like frightened rabbits, but fortunately not before I had taken several photographs of them. Now, I fear, their innocence is gone for ever.

The medersa El Mesbahiya was built by the Emir Abou Saïd Otman about the same date as El Attarin, and some sixty students still find lodging within its walls. As soon as I entered the courtyard, they crowded the cloisters as if by magic, and unkempt figures craned from the rotting balconies, sending down little avalanches of plaster with every movement. Thick masses of cobwebs filled the corners, covering the stucco-work so thickly as to make one wonder if some specially fine piece were not hidden away in the protection of the spiders. There is something impressive about this lodging-house of learning, whose past glory still dominates the squalor of the present, and something uncanny in the strange silence that reigns in spite of the fact that the place is full of people. The graceful double arch of the chapel stands out from the general decay, a thing of airy lightness, with a reed-like central column and finely worked capital to remind one of former splendour. Once there were columns



BOUANANIYA : THE COURTYARD

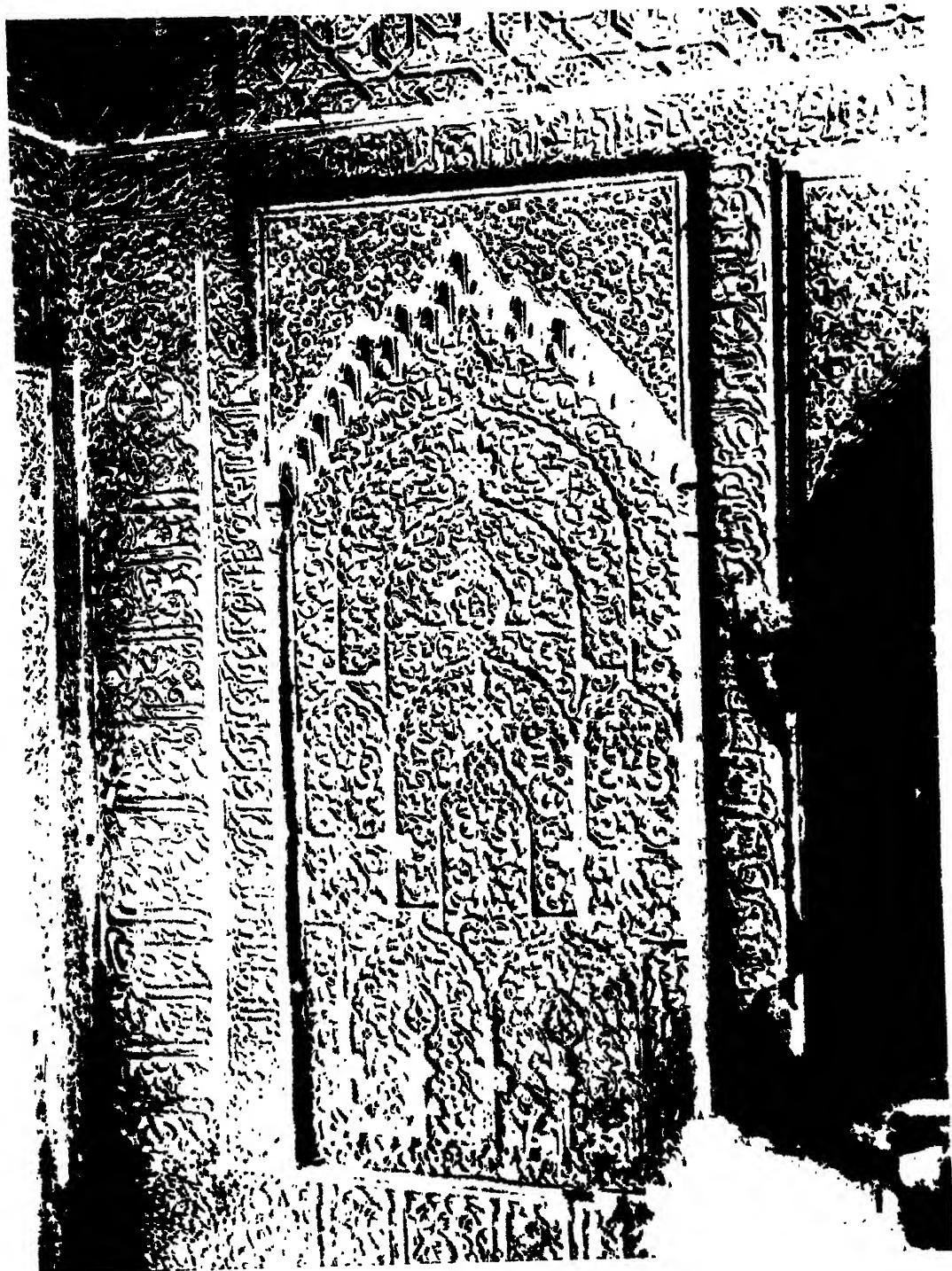
at the sides of the arch, of which unfortunately none have survived ; but the repaired central one gives some idea of the original appearance.

El Mesbahiya has the most insignificant looking fountain of any medersa, nevertheless it is really the most important of them all. Cut out of a single block of marble, it measures nine feet by three, and eighteen inches deep, and is sunk almost level with the floor of the courtyard. During the reign of the Saadian Sultan Abou El Mansour, the medersa Es Sahridj was presented with this basin, brought from Almeria in Spain, with what difficulty may be imagined. For a time it remained there, but for some unknown reason was transported later to its present position. It goes without saying that a thing of such importance—it weighed 143 quintals, or about 4½ tons—could not escape the Arab love of the marvellous. Nothing would satisfy them but to make the basin disappear during one of the numerous restorations of the medersa, or so at any rate runs the story, leaving in its place a comparatively modern intruder of identical appearance. How an object of that size and weight, which had needed whole levies from the tribes for its transport, could be made to vanish into thin air without leaving a trace—and why it should thus behave—is a mystery no Fasi attempts to solve ; so infidels like us need not hope for enlightenment.

Here I must apologise for a certain irregularity of method. The next medersa, Es Sahridj, has been described with the mosque of El Andalous. I had some hesitation about doing this, but the two are so intimately connected that it seemed more appropriate to place them together. So we will pass on to the medersa of Abou Inan, commonly called El Bouananiya, one of the most remarkable of these monuments. Many of my days in Morocco had passed, and I had become better known and perhaps less hated by the population, when early one morning towards the end of June I entered

the courtyard of El Bouananiya. Standing almost at the top of the Talaa, exactly opposite the famous House of the Magician, which, as we have seen, was one of the buildings belonging to it, the Bouananiya is certainly the medersa in which the richest decoration has remained ; and if the feeling of tranquil charm is a little less apparent than in its smaller and older neighbours, the large size of the courtyard must alone be blamed for that. It was founded by the Emir Abou Inan Farés in 1349, and was the last medersa of the Merinide dynasty. It is the only medersa possessing its own beautiful minaret, and the only one in whose mosque the *khotbeh*, or State prayer, is recited on Fridays, these two peculiarities making it unique in Morocco, and if I am not mistaken, in the whole of Northern Africa. But before describing the Bouananiya itself, there are details concerning its foundation and its founder which appear to me both interesting and humorous. In the preceding chapter we have seen how Abou Inan tried to get the prayer signal transferred from Karouiyin to his mosque-medersa, and how he built the famous clock as its supreme attraction. It remains for me to explain how the medersa came to be built at all.

In typical Moroccan fashion Abou Inan had revolted against his father, Abou El Hassan Ali. Being very ambitious, he thought, no doubt, that young shoulders could carry the cares of State better than old, but that is only a reason and not an excuse for his unfilial conduct. On hearing of his father's defeat before Kairouan in 1348, he did not hesitate to proclaim himself Sultan at Tlemcen, and even furnished the enemy with Merinide troops. For months the wretched Abou El Hassan was driven from pillar to post, vainly seeking refuge at Marrakesh and other places. In despair, he at last chose the only possible course and pardoned his son, at the same time handing over the royal power to him. Having made his peace with his father, the young Sultan came in triumph to Fez, and proceeded



EL BOUANANIYA : A STUCCO PANEL

to arrange matters with his conscience. As a sign of sorrow he decided to build a mosque-medersa, and consulted the wise men concerning a suitable site. Whereupon, with that humour which so often peeps through the sternest religions, they advised the town rubbish-heap close to the citadel, remarking that even the vilest and most evil things could be cleansed by such a pious act. Abou Inan grasped their meaning. The ground was duly purified by the construction of the sacred building, and the Sultan's conscience became as good as new by the same progress. To judge by the laudatory terms employed in the inscription of foundation of the medersa, one would imagine Abou Inan to have been the most virtuous of men ; but that is often the way with official inscriptions.

While on the subject, I may mention that the actual inscription of foundation of the Bouananiya is on a marble slab in the wall of the mosque. It gives the exact date and all details, even to the name of the *nadir* in whose care it was, and includes a curious list of the various buildings from which it derived revenue. The inscription on majolica tiles in the courtyard, mentioned further on, is incomplete, though it also gives the date and similar details.

There is one other point of interest about Abou Inan, especially as the matter in question has attracted much attention of late. The Moroccan sovereigns had already attempted to take for themselves the title of Caliph. The young prince understood very well its signification, as his father had contested it with the Hafsidies of Tunis, though he does not appear to have used it. Abou Inan, however, did not hesitate to take the title when he had himself proclaimed Sultan at Tlemcen, and it duly appears amongst others in the Bouananiya inscription. He wished to make it hereditary, but his successors were content to relinquish it, and the claim never seems to have been recognised outside Morocco.

Like most of the medersas, El Bouananiya boasts of a beautiful pair of bronze doors. I had often admired them when passing along the Talaa, and had even bestowed alms upon the old beggar who squatted beside the doorway, hoping by charity to gain in reputation. But though the beggar always accepted the infidel's gift, I never knew whether his mumbled words were a benediction or a curse. The enormous door-knockers specially attracted me. They are round and perfectly flat, pierced with an intricate geometrical design matching the decoration of the door, every available space of which has been chased till not a single corner remains unadorned. One can imagine how the artist, grown very old, looked upon his completed work. Then, at last, he raised the knocker and knocked at the door he had beautified, and was allowed, may be, to end his days in the calm seclusion of the medersa. The knockers could tell much, if they could only speak. For centuries they have watched the turbulent life of Fez flow through the narrow streets. They have seen the crowds fling themselves in impotent rage against the bronze panels. They have been seized by panting fugitives and drenched with blood a moment later. Madmen have rattled them and been admitted, for madness is something very holy ; and now an infidel has moved them to and fro, and they seemed to shiver and shrink, though there was only admiration in the touch.

From the street a flight of steps lead up to a sort of high entrance-hall, with the usual screened doorway to the courtyard and a staircase to the students rooms above. It was here that I photographed the panel mentioned on page 67, a matter of no small difficulty, as it had to be done from the window of a narrow passage on the upper floor. The illustration shows the result. The courtyard of El Bouananiya is wonderfully imposing, and its great size can easily bear the complicated decoration that covers the walls. To the east is the mosque, of which I shall speak presently, and a deep cloister,



IN THE COURTYARD OF EL BOUANANIYA : THE DOORS OF
THE HALL OF STUDY

half hidden by carved wooden screens, surrounds the remainder. This cloister is divided in the centre of its north and south sides by halls for study and contemplation, and on the west by the entrance. An incomplete inscription on very fine majolica tiles, skirting the walls, gives the same date and details of the foundation of the medersa as the tablet in the mosque, and the broad band of black lettering on a white ground, above the panels of many-coloured mosaic, forms a striking feature of the building. Above the inscription begins a riot of plaster-work and carving of every conceivable design, marvellous in its richness and in its wonderful state of preservation, but the chief glory of El Bouananiya lies in the doors of its halls of study. None are to be found in the other medersas, though every chapel once possessed them, nor could I hear of any in the mosques. The pierced geometrical designs were originally filled in with various kinds of wood, though nothing could be more charming than the effect of their present ruined condition in the wonderful setting of the courtyard.

The mosque of El Bouananiya is by far the largest of those belonging to the medersas and, as I have already mentioned, it is the only one in which the *khotbeh* is recited at Friday prayers. Its five arches take up the whole eastern side of the courtyard, from which it is divided by a small stream, bridged by steps of worn mosaic. This swiftly running stream gives a special charm to El Bouananiya. Far more than the fountains with which other medersas must be content, it seems to demand purification of the worshippers who pass it. Its clear water invites that contemplation, that loss of self, that oblivion in which we of the West can have no part; and when we watch with would-be scorn some motionless figure beside the stream, I often wonder if there is not just a grain of envy in our hearts.

The mosque itself is a simple place compared with the ornate

courtyard outside, but the contrast only adds to its dignity. Five pillars divide it into two lateral aisles. Their capitals are of the same type as those of El Attarin, but lower in form and more primitive in decoration. Besides a beautiful frame of plaster-work extending to the ceiling, the *mihrab* possesses a curious feature in the very high and narrow doors on either side of it. The door on the right leads to the sacristy where the *minbar*, or pulpit, is kept, an object which is only produced just before the Friday sermon, and whose step-like form necessitates the high opening. In the sacristy is also kept the staff which the preacher holds while speaking, and there he leaves the *lebda*, or felt carpet, carried by all Moroccan men of letters to serve as a seat. The door on the left of the *mihrab* leads on to a terrace overlooking the street behind the medersa, and has been made correspondingly high for reasons of symmetry.

While working in the mosque I was careful to remove my shoes, but the rare worshippers proved extremely hostile—far more so than in any other medersa—and photographs were obtained amid muttered imprecations which might well have become something more deadly had I lingered.

Though the medersas were primarily places of seclusion and aloofness from the turbulent life around them, it must not be imagined that their history is entirely wanting in romance. The *tholba* always formed a turbulent element of the population, and the crumbling walls of the courtyards must have witnessed many a scene of intrigue and rebellion—perhaps even of bloodshed. In most cases the records are vague and meagre, but they contain at least one story beloved of every Fasi, the story of the Sultan of the *tholba*.

Let us visit yet another medersa. This time it is in the heart of the town, with one entrance in the street of the ropemakers, from which it takes its name, 'Es Cheratin,' and another in the dark *souk* of



THE COURTYARD OF THE MEDERSA EL BOUANANIYA

the bookbinders, to my mind one of the most attractive spots in Fez. The very word conjures up visions of beautiful things, bindings in red and blue and green leather, tooled and gilded with curious designs, that lie on the shelves of the tiny shops. They are for the most part new bindings, but in some dusty corner one may still come across a treasure, tattered and ancient, that is a joy to contemplate ; and the designs of all are probably the same that adorned the students' books in the days when Cheratin first opened its doors. What splendid doors they are, rivalling El Bouananiya and El Attarin in the beauty of their bronze panels and the massive grace of knockers that seem made for giants. Through the doors one passes to a fairly large courtyard of different style to the other medersas, which at first gives an impression of plainness in spite of the richly decorated passages and cloisters surrounding it. This simplicity of the courtyard may be accounted for by the lateness of the period, the medersa having been built by Mouley Rachid in 1670 to replace an earlier one destroyed by fire. Tradition would have us believe that the burning was ordered by the Sultan as punishment for the excesses of the students, but that is a doubtful question.

About 1664 disorder and anarchy reigned in Morocco. The Saadian dynasty had come to an end, but the Alaouits, who have ruled the country ever since, had not yet become powerful. In the turmoil of those years a certain Jew named Ben Machaal held the town of Taza, between Fez and Algeria, from which he terrorised the whole region and even threatened the capital. So great was Ben Machaal's power that he gave himself the title of Sultan and did not hesitate to levy a yearly *hedia*, or tribute, from Fez, consisting of grain and merchandise, and last but not least, the most beautiful maiden of the city to adorn his *hareem*. Now, according to the legend, Mouley Er Rachid, ancestor of the Alaouit Sultans, was at that time a simple student at Fez. It also happened that the beautiful

girl chosen that year for the *hedia* of Ben Machaal was a certain *cherifa*, or descendant of the Prophet, whom he wished to marry. Implored by the weeping mother of the victim, he determined to avenge the insult to his religion and to save the maiden from the shame of a Jewish *hareem*. Being still beardless, he took her place, enveloped in the veils and *haik* of a Moslem woman, on the gaily decked camel that was to carry the weeping bride to Taza. The caravan was numerous, and the *hedia* of great richness, including no less than forty coffers with the dowry of the future princess. On its arrival at Taza, Ben Machaal, delighted and flattered by such servile recognition of his power, had the forty coffers placed within his palace, for the safer guard of their contents. The supposed maiden followed, but while Ben Machaal's eyes sought to pierce her veils, forty students sprang from the coffers, killed the tyrant and took possession of the city. Mouley Er Rachid was proclaimed Sultan by his comrades, and returned to Fez amid the acclamations of the populace he had delivered. Of course there is an epilogue—a vision of another bridal procession, with its accompanying *hedia*, making its way to the palace of the new Sultan—but this time the coffers contain no students, and a real bride reclines in the gaily decked litter.

So runs the tale, or at least one of its numerous variants, grown from a few simple facts that the Moors can make so picturesque in the telling, and which ever find applause as each new thread is added to the web of romance. It is romance that has become something concrete, for not only did Mouley Er Rachid build the medersa Es Cheratin, but to commemorate the adventure of Taza he declared that there should be a Sultan of the students, a sovereignty of a day, set up in Fez at the beginning of April every year. It is something like the Carnival of Latin countries, full of quaint and amusing customs. First the *tholba* ask the Sultan's permission to celebrate



EL BOUANANIYA : THE CARVED CEDAR DOORS

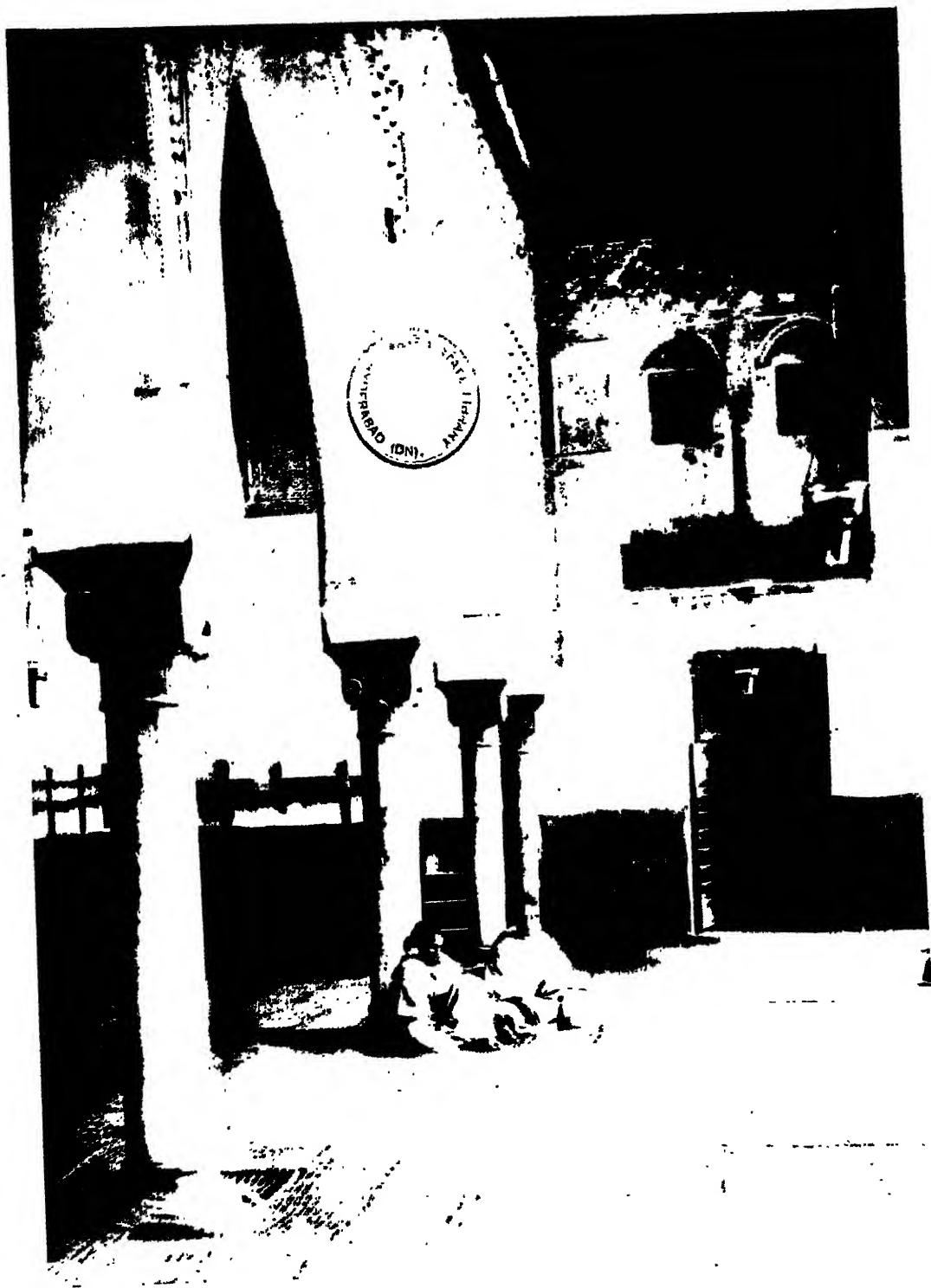
the festival, and their Sultanate is put up to auction. Subscriptions are also collected from the principal citizens of Fez, and if the students' requests are not complied with, they threaten to send armies of fleas and other pugnacious animals against the recalcitrant, 'which will keep you from eating at your table or sleeping in your bed.' When sufficient money has been collected, the *tholba* prepare for a *nzaha*, or holiday, of a week. The real Sultan sends all the insignia of sovereign power to his colleague; an escort of soldiers, rich costumes, one of his own guards, a saddled horse, lance-bearers, and men with silk scarves to disperse the flies. On the Friday following the election of the students' Sultan, begins what one may call the festival proper. On that day he leaves his medersa in great pomp to celebrate prayer at the mosque of El Andalous, and also visits the *koubba* of Sidi Ali Ben Harazem, Mouley Rachid's favourite saint, outside Bab Fetouh. The following day, after the mid-day prayer, he again leaves the city, this time by Bab Mahrouq, and gains the banks of the river Fez where his camp has been pitched. Here all is gaiety and feasting. The Fasis make a point of picnicking in the meadows full of wild flowers, and soon a sort of fair springs up, with its crowds of idlers, its fortune-tellers and hawkers of sweetmeats, and its vendors of tea and sherbet. On the seventh day the real Sultan sends a gift to his student 'cousin.' It is generally escorted by his sons or brothers, with great ceremony, and vizirs bestow the traditional money, sheep, sugar-loaves, butter, tea, candles, bread and semolina for the *cous-cous*. Except for the sheep, the list reads more like an English workhouse treat than a feast of Moorish students, but Morocco is the land of paradox. At last comes the visit of the real Sultan to the camp, the culminating point of the festival. The scene is most impressive. The Sultan, mounted on a white horse with saddle and trappings of pale green, is wrapped in a burnous of white cloth, the hood of his *djellaba* fastened round

his head by a white silken cord. Above him is borne the imperial parasol of dark red satin, surmounted by a golden bull, while in front of his horse walk negro slaves waving long silken scarves. Over all is a whiteness so dazzling that against it one hardly notices the delicate tints of the harness, the colour of the rich garments beneath their thin covering of fine linen, or even the note of red struck by the royal parasol. The Sultan of the *tholba* is also mounted, and rides towards his visitor with haughty mien, but after some jesting between the two royalties, he throws himself upon the ground and kisses the stirrup of his sovereign, who then grants certain favours to him and to his family.* This brings the feast to an end, and next day life in the medersas takes up its tranquil course once more, tranquil for all—except the Sultan of the *tholba*. That unfortunate ex-royalty has to flee from the camp very early in the morning, and gain his tiny student's room unnoticed, lest his comrades remind him in various more or less unpleasant ways that his glory is gone and his power a thing of yesterday.

I paid a visit to the Sultan of the *tholba*, a poor-looking little man of about thirty from Algeria, who happened that year to belong to Es Cheratin. His tiny room contained nothing except a mat, a folded burnous for a bed, two books and a teapot—the outfit of an ascetic. He received me with dignity, murmuring the customary polite phrases ; but reference to the festival in which he had played so important a part brought no smile to his lips, and I wondered if he had been as solemn during the week in camp by the river.

With Es Cheratin ends the description of the medersas, gems of Moorish art, ruins of a glorious past, sacred places hidden for centuries from foreign eyes in the depths of Fez. Repairs and restoration have been completed in spite of enormous difficulties ; difficulties of cost, difficulties of material, such as finding the old

* Description taken from *Le Maroc d'aujourd'hui*, by Eugène Aubin.



EL ROUANANIYA : ARCHES IN THE MOSQUE

colours for the mosaic, difficulties in discovering workmen with the knowledge of old methods and old designs. All these have been faced and overcome by the very efficient French Service des Beaux Arts et Monuments Historiques, and the people of Fez have much to thank them for.

Late one evening, when my many days were drawing to an end, I returned to the medersa El Bouananiya. The deserted courtyard lay silent in the moonlight, but suddenly the stillness was broken, and from some adjacent terrace came the sound of music—the one indispensable ornament of life, say the Moors. Tremulous and somewhat harsh, it rose and fell in waves of strange melody, punctuated by the monotonous tapping of the tiny Moroccan drum. Gradually the magic of the singing worked its spell. Mingled with the splash of the fountain, the words told of the memory of Southern Spain, the home of Moorish power and civilisation, and of the hatred that will ever remain against the Spanish conquerors.

The voice ceased and the courtyard was silent once more. Even the water of the fountain seemed to hold its breath, and quickly I slipped away, lest the spell should break and the medersa fall in ruins upon the infidel who had stolen the likeness of its splendour.

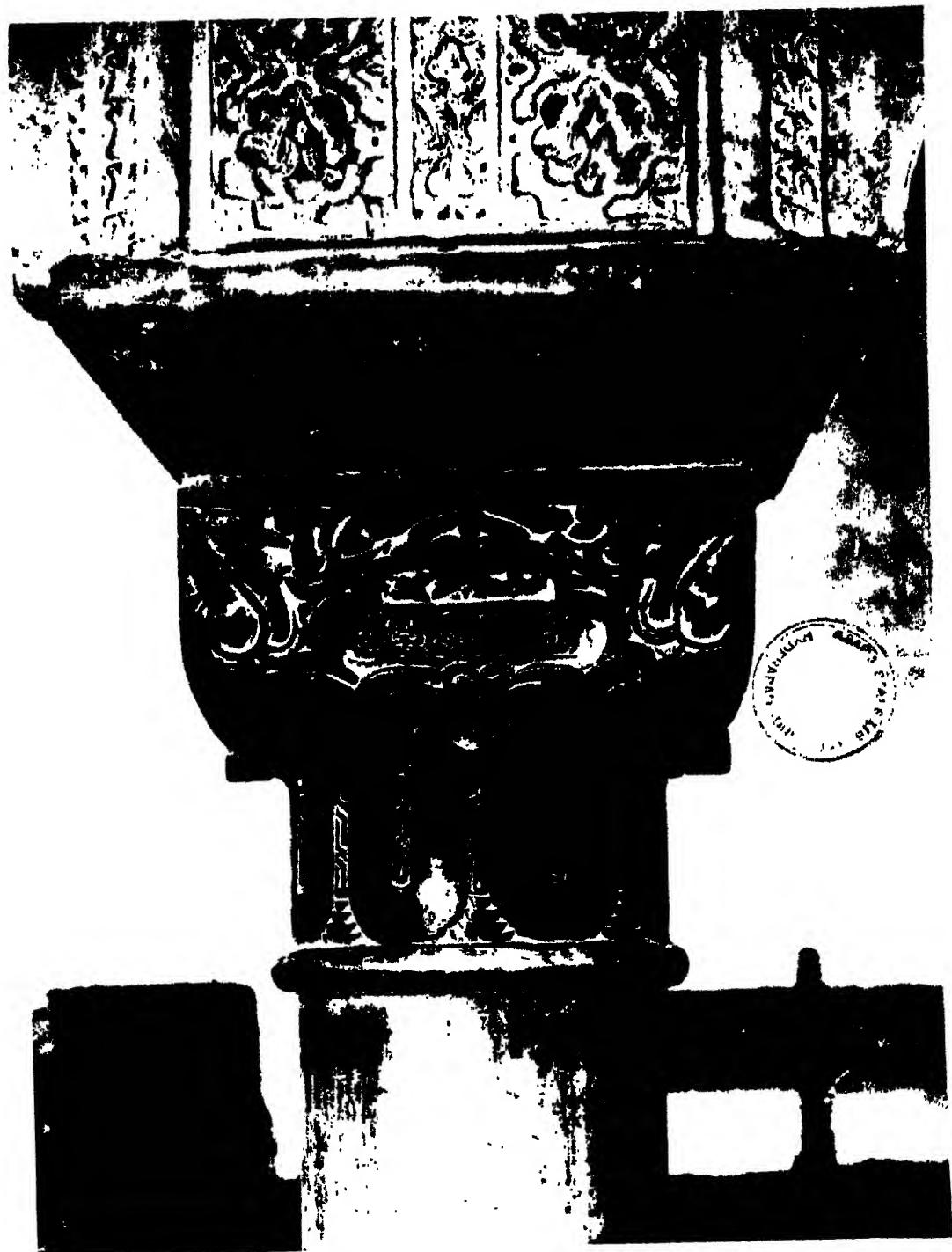
CHAPTER VI

DAR EL MAKHZEN

THE subject of royal palaces is to be approached with circumspection. A good journalist does not admit that he was allowed to visit a palace without difficulty. He emphasises the preliminary negotiations, the correspondence with Court dignitaries, the final permit. He is cunning. He reserves his effect till the end. Having described various magnificent halls and galleries, he pauses significantly before a certain closed door. The reader holds his breath. The door opens—not wide and not for long, but just sufficiently to disclose quite an ordinary room, with ordinary furniture and a large writing-table littered with papers and books, among which the journalist is astounded to perceive an A.B.C. and a Whitaker's Almanack. The sanctum of some ruler has been revealed to a public hungry for useless detail.

Had I been allowed to see the apartments of the present Sultan of Morocco, I should doubtless have found something just as simple and disappointing as did the imaginary journalist. But in this respect my visit to the Dar El Makhzen must be considered a failure, because in uncivilised Morocco the sovereign's bedroom is still his own, and not a mine of journalistic copy.

In Fez one must banish from one's mind all European parallels. The description I have given of Bou Jeloud will serve as some sort of preparation for the Dar El Makhzen, or Imperial Palace of Fez



EL BOUANANIYA : CAPITAL OF ONE OF THE PILLARS IN THE MOSQUE

Djedid. But whereas the length and breadth of Bou Jeloud are easily measurable, one hardly dares to give dimensions of its big brother for fear of erring on the side of modesty. The most ardent fisherman might have wandered through the place and told his tale with a clear conscience. Even he would surely have hesitated to go beyond half a mile in length, which is, I believe, about the distance covered by the maze of buildings and courtyards.

Royal palaces are always attractive. Even when newly built there is something mysterious about them, and something fascinatingly uncomfortable, which one knows the chief inmates do all they can to escape. In Europe, comfort for rulers is a comparatively recent innovation. Up to the middle of the eighteenth century personal ease was unknown at Court. Take the Palace of Versailles as a typical illustration. Its gilded halls were a lesson in publicity. In them monarchs dressed and undressed, ate and slept, lived and died, amid a crowd of staring courtiers. Only under Louis XVI did an attempt at privacy come in the shape of a modest suite of apartments overlooking an inner courtyard; and Marie Antoinette marked an epoch by the introduction of a bathroom.

Among the Moors, however, the Sultan always possessed his *hareem*, a word which simply means 'the reserved, or private place,' where he could retire to enjoy the society of his women, and dispense entirely with ceremony and etiquette. The *hareem* has a wonderful attraction for non-Moslems, and in spite of what anyone may say to the contrary, the chief interest of a European visitor to a Moslem house invariably centres round this paradise, into which, if he be a male, no power can make him enter. I certainly felt the charm of the forbidden, and when at last the day of my visit to the Imperial Palace arrived, the idea of exploring the residence of a descendant of the great Mouley Ismaïl, the size of whose *hareem* was legendary, held a certain hopeful anticipation

of adventure. Had I known all that I was destined to see of the feminine gender behind those high brown walls, I might have felt less ardent—but that incident will be related in due course.

As we approached the chief entrance of the palace, what I can only describe as the 'wall feeling,' a phrase which travellers in Morocco will readily understand, became overwhelming. I have already mentioned this sensation, rather resembling the popular nightmare in which the sleeper is microscopic and everything else enormous. Doubtless I shall do so again, for it is the one repetition that needs no apology, the unvarying keynote of Moorish cities and castles that never fails in its effect.

The Dar El Makhzen is divided, roughly speaking, into two parts, the various administrative buildings and the Imperial Palace, the whole occupying a space almost as large as the rest of Fez Djedid. From Bab Segma a vast esplanade, shut in by high battlemented walls and towers, leads through a gateway decorated with coloured tiles to an enclosure known as the Old Mechouar. Here the various vizirs, surrounded by their secretaries, transact the business of state, while from the balcony of a lofty pavilion the Sultan can keep an eye on the activities of his ministers. Up to this point the public has free access, but beyond it lies the maze of buildings of the palace proper, an imperial residence which comparatively few Europeans have entered, and then—with the exception of the Europeans of Abd El Aziz—only as far as the Blue Pavilion, a construction of recent date where ambassadors were received. Thus the court of the Old Mechouar was our real point of departure for the unknown.

At the end of it stood a high and rather narrow gateway, flanked by arched arcades and roofed with the inevitable green tiles, a modest approach perhaps, but effective because of its imposing surroundings. Here we were met by the officials who were to



EL BOUANANIYA : THE STREAM BEFORE THE MOSQUE

accompany us, all except one—the most powerful servant in the household of any Moslem potentate—who only put in an appearance later. In his absence, these *makhzen* officials made an interesting study. At first sight all seemed alike, shrouded in voluminous white burnous, with white socks and yellow slippers. Under each hood appeared a bearded face. The skin was fair, and the eyes brown and somnolent, with the smouldering fire of cruelty close beneath the surface. After the greetings and compliments of ceremony a move was made towards the nearest buildings, and I began to watch the strange procession of contrasts, comedy and tragedy, old and new, care and neglect that form the Imperial Palace of Fez. Courtyard followed courtyard, sometimes impressive and well kept, sometimes covered with masses of weeds and grass. There was generally a high, balconied building over the gateway, and beneath the arcades mysterious doors led into the maze of rooms one guessed must lie behind them. Sometimes we passed straight from one courtyard to another. Sometimes the way led through dark passages that wound serpent-like till all sense of direction vanished, and it was on issuing from such darkness that the greatest surprises generally lay in store. Once, the sudden opening of a door revealed a vast walled space, formerly surrounded by dwellings, but now a desert of weeds and bushes, with here and there broken pillars of brick, like some Pompeian market-place. In the corner the green-tiled minaret of a small mosque seemed to invite the grasshoppers and lizards to praise Allah, if men there were none in this desolation to hear the call to prayer. By a narrow staircase whose steps trembled ominously, as if to say, "Come back a little later, infidel, and we shall perish together," I mounted to the roof and tried to get some idea of the topography of the amazing constellation of buildings and open spaces. It seemed a hopeless task, for the more one gazed the more confusing became the puzzle. In every direction rose walls of greater

or lesser height, turning and twisting round invisible enclosures. Above them two minarets—one of which was particularly modern-looking and ugly—rose skywards from flat and green-tiled roofs, sometimes adorned with low white cupolas ; while beyond a particularly straight stretch of wall clustered the close-built houses of the *mellah*, or Jewish quarter, the only spot that showed where palace ended and town began.

Among the jumble of conflicting elements two things specially held my attention. One was a large unfinished building of several storeys, standing apart in its enclosure, its walls pierced by yawning holes where doors and windows should be ; the other a bandstand in the middle of a garden-like space, an unmistakable bandstand of the type to be met with in any seaside resort. There was something irresistible about the two objects. They reminded me of the masks of Comedy and Tragedy, on either side of the stage of a theatre, that one stares at in the vain hope of discovering why the smile of Comedy lacks sincerity and why Tragedy is always funny if seen from a certain angle. But I digress. A bandstand meant a band—perhaps even music ; imperial music executed by imperial musicians. The Sultan Abd El Aziz, I knew, had possessed such a luxury, and I felt apprehensive.

“ An interesting view,” said M. Tranchant de Lunel, emerging from the staircase. “ Ah, that,” he went on, as I pointed in silence to the unfinished building, “ was built by Mouley Hafid as his special dwelling, but he had to retire to Tangier before it could be completed. Another time we may perhaps go over it, but to-day there is only time for some of the inhabited palaces.” It seemed strange to hear the word used deliberately in the plural, but later I understood the reason. As Sultan followed Sultan, each constructed for himself new buildings and courtyards. Fez was not always the chosen spot. The Saadians preferred Marrakesh ; Mouley Ismaïl,

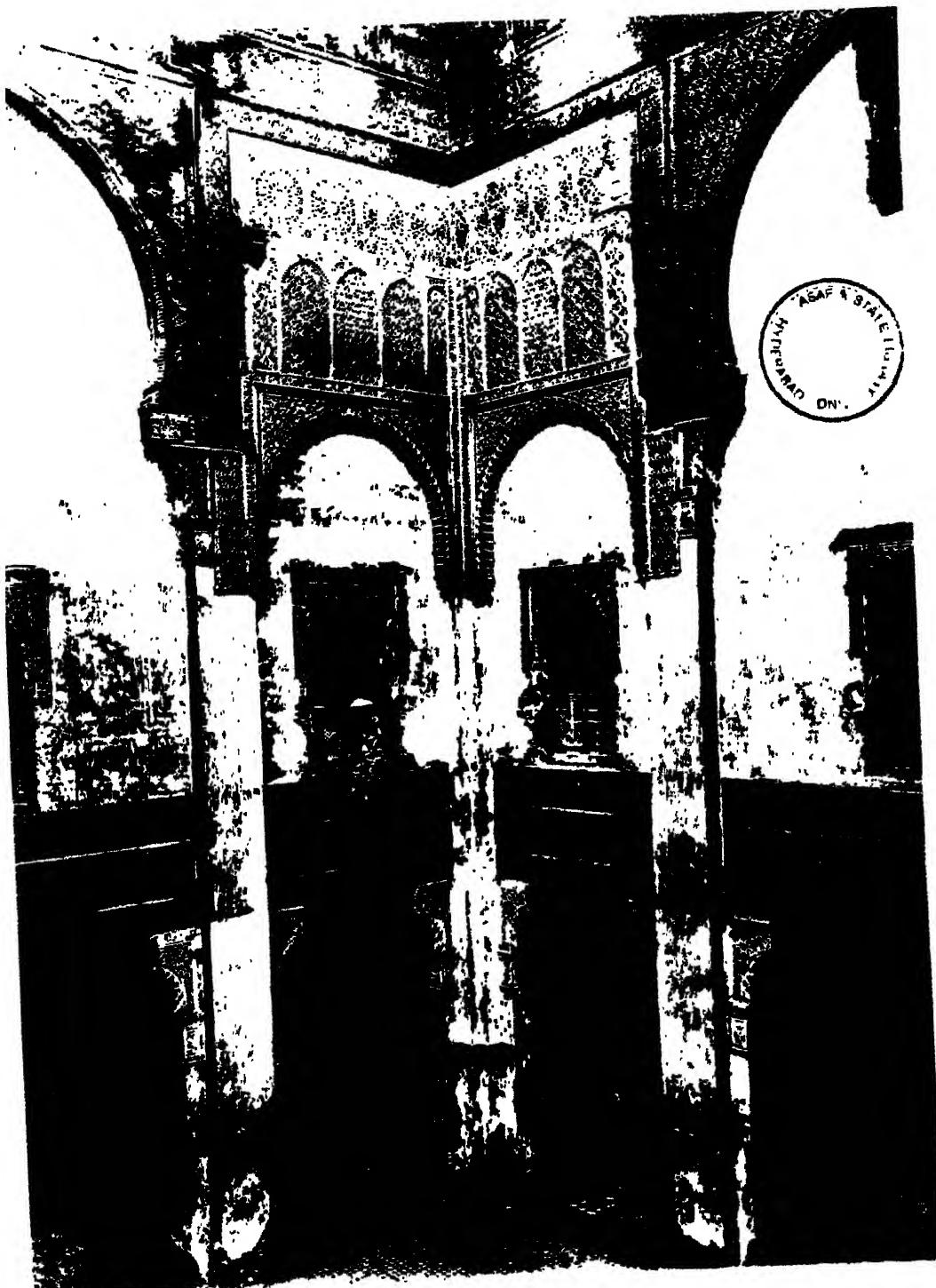


EL BOUANANIYA : MOSAIC BRIDGE LEADING TO THE MOSQUE

who hated Fez and was hated by the Fasis, chose Mequinez ; Mouley Youssef, the present Sultan, has made Rabat his favourite residence. In all circumstances superstition ruled it most unlucky to inhabit the house of one's predecessor ; but superstition is often made to serve as a cloak for simple and unpleasant reasons. In the history of Moroccan sovereigns such reasons are not, as a rule, far to seek. Where reigns frequently ended in violence, the state apartments seldom escaped without bloodstains ; and if actual gore could be easily removed, memory and bad conscience were more tenacious. Change of scene became, therefore, the first prescription ordered by superstition for each new imperial patient, and the very natural desire—to which most Sultans gave full scope in at least one of their capitals—of outshining in splendour one who had probably been a hated rival, completed the cure. With two such good reasons for growth, it is not surprising that the palace kept on throwing out new constructions, sometimes making use of the old ones, sometimes deserting them altogether. The ruined building of Mouley Hafid is an excellent example. His successor would not touch it, preferring to leave the empty shell as it was, rather than finish or destroy it. But the change of a ruler often brought with it other tragedies besides assassination and deserted buildings. With the new Sultan came new people, and especially a new *hareem* ; and as, in Morocco, 'once a lady of the *hareem*, always a lady of the *hareem*' is not only a popular saying, but an unfortunate fact, there remained courtyards filled with the beauties of other reigns, grown old in neglect and oblivion, but still as jealously guarded as ever. If the Court had to fly at short notice—an event by no means uncommon—they were sometimes even faced with starvation, and rare indeed were those lucky enough to pass from the favour of one lord to another. What an existence ! And yet it was envied by many. The ladies often arrived in the guise of presents, and their families were naturally proud of the honour

of contributing to the imperial household. For them it meant not merely the gift of a slave girl or a member of their clan, but—what was far more important—the remission of taxes or the pardon of some more or less imaginary crime, or possibly even the tacit permission to commit a very real one. All this did not, of course, prevent intrigue with the rising star who seemed likely one day to dethrone the reigning Sultan and build yet another palace behind the battlemented walls of the Dar El Makhzen. I imagine that the nobles of Morocco must have shared the views of the Scotch lady who, when asked why in church she always bowed at the mention of his Satanic Majesty, replied, “Oh, well, it costs nothing to be polite, and—you *never know.*”

More dark passages brought us to the room where we were to await that most important personage alluded to earlier in this chapter, the chief eunuch of the palace. I found myself wondering what he would look like, and especially what his name would be. I had read somewhere that the guardian of Mouley Ismail’s numerous *hareem* rejoiced in the high-sounding appellation of ‘ Bombar John Tatta.’ Was the twentieth century going to beat that? Unfortunately I was never introduced to the great man, so my curiosity has remained unsatisfied. As to his appearance, I felt hopeful. Previous experience of the prim, frock-coated gentlemen of imperial Constantinople had been disappointing from the spectacular point of view, but surely Morocco would produce something of more Russian ballet-like brilliancy. As a matter of fact Morocco did better still, for the imposing negro, white-robed and white-turbaned, who shortly made his appearance, was essentially Moroccan, and fitted his surroundings more worthily than any phantasy of my brain could have done. He bore himself with a weary dignity, quite in keeping with the cares of his high office, and with a certain sinister joviality which left no doubt in my mind that a bow-string was concealed



THE COURTYARD OF ES CHERATIN

face p. 88

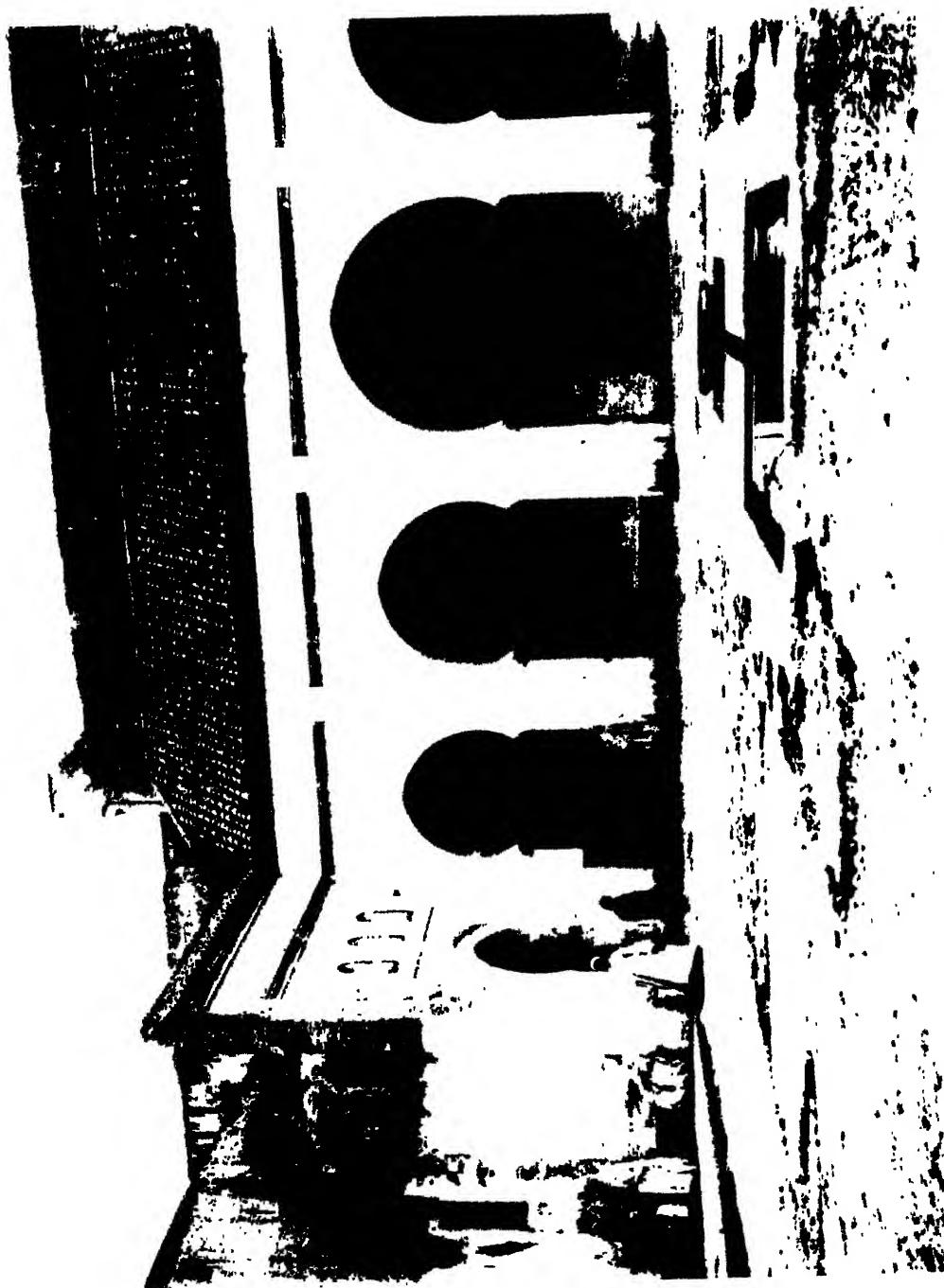
about his person. The tragedies of the past seemed to fill the empty room. Was it here that El Roghi Bou Hamara was brought, doubled up in his wooden cage, to pay, at last, the price of years of revolt ? Was it in that dark corner that certain great ones rolled in anguish under the indifferent eye of their Sultan, while the palms of their hands were slashed with knives, and the wounds salted and bound tightly with raw-hide thongs ? A sinister place ; yet in it were the only two ancient works of art I saw in the whole palace. One was a large marble panel in the doorway, covered with beautiful carved arabesques ; the other a triple marble pillar with decorated capital and base, the whole hewn from a single block, that reminded me of pillars seen somewhere in Italy, probably at Venice. As I have pointed out elsewhere, Roman pillars are very rare in Morocco, those found in mosques, medersas, and palaces being generally the later product of Carrara or other Italian quarries.

A movement among the group of officials roused me from my reverie. The chief eunuch gave certain orders to one of his satellites, who immediately disappeared through a doorway, and a moment later we made a move in the same direction. "He has sent ahead to get the ladies out of the way," whispered a voice in my ear, as we passed into the open. Such may have been the intention of the 'Guardian of Beauteous Ones,' but for once his orders were not carried out swiftly enough, and I was favoured with a fleeting glimpse of the ladies of the imperial *hareem* scuttling away like frightened rabbits from the masculine invasion of their sanctuary. Instinctively my eyes sought among them the lovely queen of the desert or the starry-eyed Circassian who could account for such precautions. Alas that I should have sworn to tell the truth in this book ! There were only a few old women of vanished charm, and some grinning negresses who chattered as they ran, like the monkeys of their native jungle. Once the property of a former Sultan, they

had been left to exist as best they could in the tiny houses surrounding this great courtyard. It was certainly one of the strangest places in the palace. On one side rose high buildings in the half-finished state I had already remarked, while graceful pavilions, with arcaded loggias and battlemented walls crowned with storks' nests, occupied the ends. But it was the central piece of water, about the size of two tennis courts placed end to end, and planted on either side with trees, that riveted my attention more than anything I had yet seen. Not only were ornate electric-light standards dotted about its rim, but at one end floated a very large motor-boat, once richly decorated, but now in sad need of a coat of paint, and probably suffering from a very rusty interior. I could not help admiring such a splendid example of what George Sand called '*le désir accompli*' in a country which, at the time of the boat's arrival, possessed no roads and no transport save the backs of camels and men. One can picture the first voyage of the strange vessel ; the wonder and fear of the courtiers, the thinly veiled disapproval of the *oulema*. Perhaps the ladies now safely hidden in the little houses of the courtyard sat behind its throbbing motor as it skimmed bravely round the tank ; for surely a motor-boat that could reach Fez must have navigated at least once. Perhaps. But when I looked at the area of the water and the size of the boat with its powerful motor, I had my doubts. No matter, the imperial desire to have such a plaything in the palace of Fez had been satisfied. A motor-boat and electric light ! Decidedly we were moving with the times. What surprise would the next courtyard contain ?

Here let me digress for a moment and say something of the mania for European playthings that formed the chief weakness of the Sultan Abd El Aziz, owner of the motor-boat. The facts are well known, but in view of what follows it may be well to recall them here. During the first years of his reign the young Sultan, who

A COURTYARD IN THE DAR EL MAKHZEN



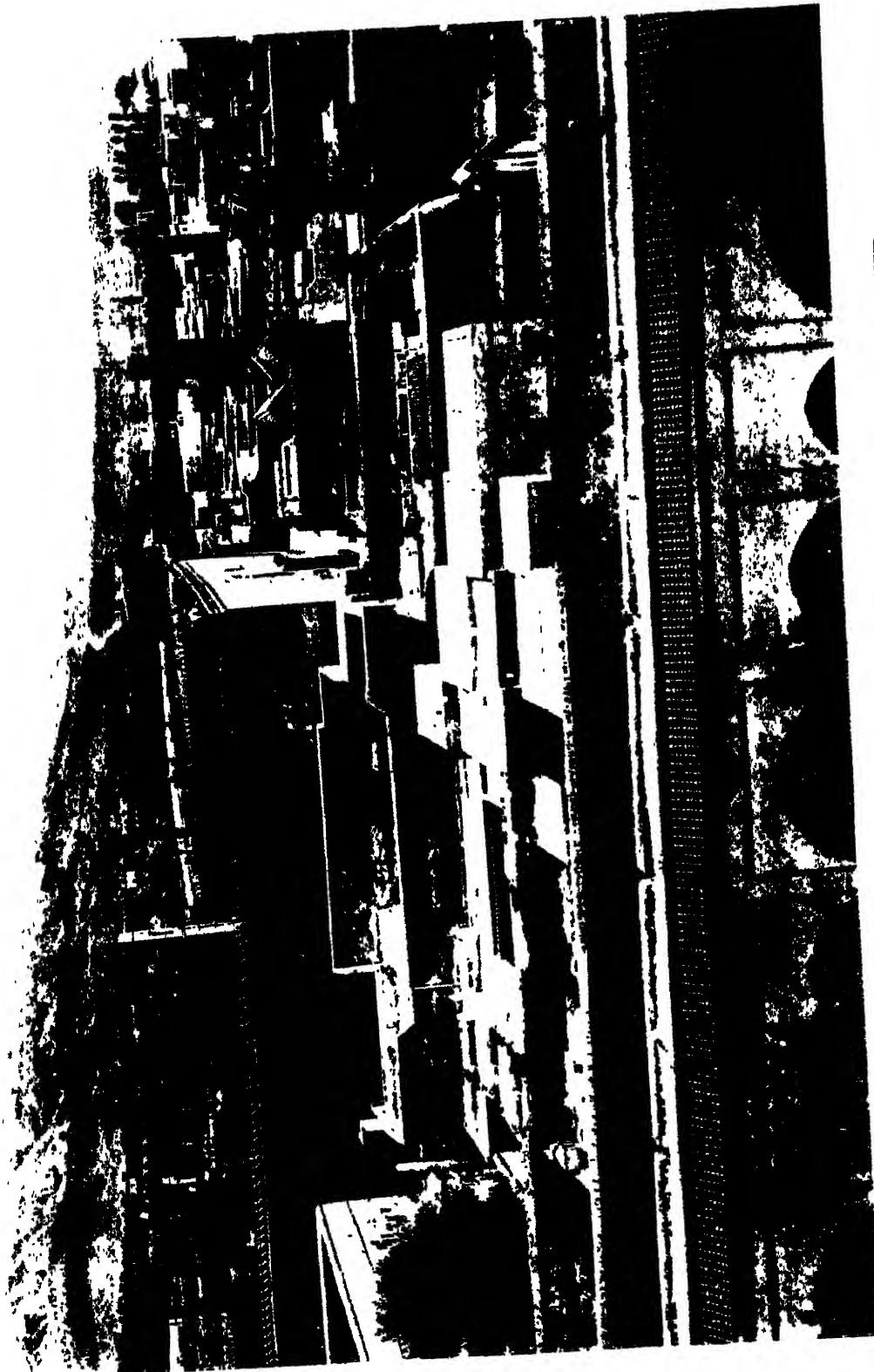
had succeeded at the age of fourteen, was entirely in the power of Ba Achmed, the Grand Vizir, a man of extraordinary force of character and great cunning, who saw to it that his charge lived in the state of impenetrable seclusion demanded by custom and religion. After the death of Ba Achmed, Abd El Aziz gradually came under the influence of certain Europeans who for years had awaited permission to fulfil his most fantastic wishes and at the same time to line their own pockets. The Sultan's love of every European toy that could bewilder or amuse soon became a matter of international competition, and adventurous spirits from various countries vied in their efforts to obtain orders. Among these the name of Caïd MacLean, reorganiser of the Shereefian army, is perhaps the best known ; but France, Germany and Italy were all ably represented. Thus it came about that caravans of strange-looking objects began to wend their way from the coast towards the Dar El Makhzen, leaving the imperial mind no thought save for the marvels unpacked and admired one day, forgotten the next. State business became a fatigue to be reduced to a minimum. Convention was thrown to the winds, prejudice ruthlessly trampled upon, and the Sultan continued his experiments in modern civilisation in the face of growing criticism.

The first place in point of value was naturally held by the orders for jewellery, on which large sums of money were spent and large profits made. But mere beauty and rarity soon had to give way to things more spectacular in appearance and more exciting of manipulation. Buildings were set apart as workshops in a courtyard which already lodged the imperial menagerie (a German contribution to the home-life of the palace), and before long a billiard-room complete with full-sized table made its appearance, ready to reveal the mysteries of pool and snooker when His Majesty was tired of feeding the lions. The transport of this billiard-table and of the

motor-boat must rank as the most glorious achievements of a glorious epoch. Beside them, the state carriage, several motor-cars and bicycles, a hansom cab and a miniature railway were easy ; while ice machines, balloons, photographic and wireless outfits, cinematographs and boxes of conjuring tricks hardly deserve mention. There is no need to follow any further the vagaries of Abd El Aziz. His days are past, but the motor-boat still floats on the narrow waters of its prison, and in the darkness of deserted rooms there are still silver-bound coffers within whose plush-lined depths lie dozens of photographic cameras—all alike—rows of magic lanterns, cages of mechanical nightingales that have forgotten how to warble, in a word the whole gamut of playthings of an exotic potentate. Without a doubt this unorthodox intimacy with Europeans contributed in no small measure to the downfall of Abd El Aziz ; for it must be remembered that the Sultan of Morocco is also the sacred head of the community, and that behaviour in any way affecting his reputation for sanctity can only be regarded with disapproval. In his villa at Tangier, Abd El Aziz has had time to reflect on these things, and though many of his toys accompanied him into exile, perhaps he no longer plays with them. One object he left behind, no doubt with a sly hint to his successor as to the manner of its use. It is an ornate tricycle, fitted with two tandem seats beneath a large umbrella. The Sultan reclined in the richly upholstered back seat, while the pedalling was done from the front one. Abd El Aziz, it is said, found great joy in forcing his Prime Minister to furnish the motive power, and would career round the palace gardens, beating the old man heartily if he did not work fast enough.

Among Oriental rulers such treatment of Prime Ministers was not unfrequent, and sometimes took a more unpleasant form than mere blows. There is the case of a certain Shah of Persia, who, when shown the place of execution in an English prison, requested that

DAR EL MAKHZEN : THE RUINED BUILDING OF MOULKY HAFID



an exhibition should forthwith be given. "But we have nobody under sentence of death at present," protested the official. "No matter," remarked the Shah, "my Prime Minister is here ; he will do very well." So one hopes that our European Premiers—Conservative or otherwise—understand how much they have to be thankful for.

From the courtyards of Mouley Abd El Aziz we came out upon a vast terrace flanked by constructions of more recent date, overlooking a very large rectangular space in which an attempt at a formal garden had been made. At one time it may have been quite a success, for there were regular flower-beds and tiled paths and a number of small trees ; but it now presented an unkept appearance, with none of the charm of the small enclosed gardens I had seen elsewhere—at Bou Jeloud for example. I was told that among the importations of the palmy days above mentioned was an English gardener ; but I prefer to believe that he hailed from Scotland, the only country capable of producing the combination of contemplative ardour, self-will, and slowness that spells perfection in that particular walk of life. No doubt he tended his beds with care, and managed to get his own way as easily as if Fez had been Inverness ; and did his imperial master not see eye to eye with him in the matter of potting and planting, he would certainly have argued the point, if the Sultan's lamentable ignorance of English had not proved an insurmountable barrier to conversation. One can imagine him muttering over some freshly imported 'rambler' :

Oh, gin my Love were yon red rose,
That grows upon the castle wa',

oblivious of the consequences were the chief eunuch to overhear him. The flowers still bloom in the palace garden, but the gardener has departed with the other European adventurers. More's the pity, for his was work that could only bring happiness.

Beyond all these buildings came the *aguedal*, or park, with its plantations and wall-enclosed distances—a foretaste of the sadness of Mequinez—that marked the end of the Sultan's palace. How far had we come? What area did it all cover? One seemed to have walked miles, and yet there was much still unseen, places that no European would ever be permitted to visit. As I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the apartments of Mouley Youssef, the present ruler of Morocco, came under this category, so in spite of various details that were given me concerning them, I shall attempt no description of what I did not actually see. But it appears that the Sultan generally inhabited a large central chamber in which he both ate and slept. Surrounding it were the quarters of his four legitimate wives and their attendants, and beyond these the *hareem* proper. Into this holy of holies no male save the Sultan ever penetrated, the whole of his personal service being carried out by women, with the exception of the cooking, which was done by negroes. I do not know if the arrangement still subsists, but in a conservative country like Morocco it is unlikely to have undergone any important change.

Slowly we retraced our steps towards the distant gateway. "Might I have another view from the roof?" I asked. A staircase was found, and once more I looked upon the panorama of palace, city, and mountain, and watched how the mid-day heat made the terraces shiver and the minarets hang suspended between heaven and earth. From somewhere beneath my feet came the muffled roar of wild animals. "The menagerie," said the chief eunuch, smiling with the benevolence of a Grand Inquisitor. "There are lions and tigers—and sometimes even Jews—" "Jews!" I echoed, horrified; and everybody laughed. "Yes," continued the great man, "once we put Jews into the empty cages, beside the other beasts. They were very frightened." And again laughter



DAR EL MAKIIZEN : THE MOTOR BOAT

greeted what was evidently considered a good joke. Then I remembered how, during the massacre of 1912, the Sultan had given refuge to numerous fugitives from the *mellah*, and lodged them behind the bars of the imperial menagerie. It seemed strange to find Jews specially protected by the representative of Islam ; yet such, for centuries, had been their position in Morocco. From the earliest times there was a Hebrew element in the population. One hears tales of the Romans finding them already established, and they were certainly in the country on the arrival of the first Mohammedans. The restriction to a special quarter and the wearing of a special costume seem to have been imposed—in Fez at least—under the first Merinide Emir, Abou Youssef Yakoub El Mansour, the founder of Fez Djedid. Prior to that time the Jews had lived in a state of comparative freedom near Bab El Gisa, and even in the centre of the city, for one hears of their houses being taken over at a valuation to make room for enlargements of the Karouiyin mosque in 1065. According to tradition, the principal reason for the change in their treatment was that their great riches had gradually brought the whole government of the city into their hands, forcing the Moslem population to rise in self-defence and overthrow them. That may be so, but the fact that the *mellah* is to be found beside the palace or fortress of every Moroccan town proves that Emirs and Sultans looked upon the Jews as a necessary and lucrative evil, not to be exposed to unnecessary dangers.

Very different was their treatment in Turkey at a slightly later date. There they were not only tolerated, but actually encouraged. After the taking of Constantinople, Sultan Mohammed Fatik invited the Jewish communities from Asia to come and settle in the city, as he knew that he could depend upon their loyalty, with the result that Jews came even from Germany to take up their residence in Turkey. Also, when over 200,000 Jews were driven from Spain by

Ferdinand and Isabella, a special firman was issued by Sultan Bayazid II to the effect that they were to be well received, and before long they held an important position in the Ottoman Empire, working as surgeons, interpreters, and artillerymen, and teaching the Turks how to manufacture gunpowder. Not only were they protected within the empire, but on several occasions Jewish communities in other countries were saved by the action of the Sultans, as, for example, on the attempted confiscation of their property in Ancona by Pope Paul IV in 1555, when the massacre of all Christians in Turkey was threatened as a reprisal. Needless to say the Pope gave way. Towards the end of the sixteenth century a change took place, and the wealth of the Jews began to excite the cupidity of the authorities and the rapacity of the Sultans. From that moment their history followed much the same course in Turkey as it did in Morocco, though it was not until 1700 that restrictions of costume, residence, and so forth were imposed upon them in Constantinople, nearly 400 years later than in Fez. Looking through an amusing old book of travel in Morocco, written by a certain Captain Braithwaite,* I found the following description of the Jews of Tetuan.

‘They are counted in this Town about 5,000 souls and live in 150 houses, several families live in a house. They are richer here than in any part of the Emperor of Morocco’s Dominions, yet by reason of their great Taxes are miserably poor. They are Brokers between the Moors and Christians and generally cheat both without good looking after.’

Good looking after! The three words spoke volumes, and I

* *History of the Revolutions in the Empire of Morocco, upon the Death of the late Emperor Mouley Ishmaïl.* 1729.



A MARBLE PANEL IN THE DAR EL MAKHZEN

wondered—had the chief eunuch had his way—if only empty lions' cages would have received the fugitives of 1912 ?

With murmured salutations and compliments from our guides, we reached the same high archway through which we had entered the palace. The gate opened, and once more the expanse of the Old Mechouar stretched before us, empty and dazzling in the heat. No, not quite empty. Almost invisible in the narrow band of shadow cast by the wall, moved the lean, black-robed figure of a Jew. For a moment it stopped, glancing over its shoulder as if in fear of being followed, then scuttled round the corner in the direction of the *mella*h.

CHAPTER VII

DRIFTING

OF all the quarters of Fez, Karouiyin has the greatest fascination. Charm is everywhere in the great city, but its true life seems to be concentrated in the labyrinth of streets and lanes that lie between the famous mosque and the Oued Fez, like a rare essence that will evaporate on contact with the outer air. Fez Djedid has its grandeur and its terrifying vastness ; Bou Jeloud weaves the spell in its gardens and patios ; the descending streets draw the meshes tighter, burrowing beneath masses that seem ever higher ; but, once at the bottom of the maelstrom, the bonds are taut and knotted and the magic of Fez works at full strength. It is magic against which no protective talisman is necessary, for its one command is to drift spellbound while time passes slowly in the semi-darkness.

No other streets are like the streets round Karouiyin. I have wandered through the bazaar of Damascus while it still breathed the spirit of the East, and the wares of Europe had not quite conquered its merchants. The city lay softly among the verdure, where the mountains ended and the plain began ; and from its narrow valley came the Barada, swift at first, then flowing gently through a hundred channels that led to gardens and courts and coffee-houses. At night there was silence in the gardens, but the lights from the coffee-houses danced in the stream, and music



ES CHERATIN : THE COURTYARD

rose from the patios, an enchantment of light and air and laughter with no dark secret hidden in its depths. I have crossed the bridge of boats at Baghdad, when it alone spanned the river and no great open way had been pierced through the city. The tunnelled bazaar held the commerce of Arabia and Persia and Turkestan. Its dark recesses cradled fortunes destined to grow in the hothouse air of Bombay and flourish among the mists of England. At one end of the bridge of boats stood an Arabian café with floor of beaten earth and high settees. There the merchants loved to congregate, and the youth of Baghdad, in silken abbas, swept by the blind beggar at the door, placing a coin in the outstretched hand for joy at the murmured blessing, or for fear of a curse on him who should give no alms. Hassan was often there, arguing with the carpet merchant from Shiraz about the lamentable faults in his designs, or the poor texture of his wool. In a dark corner, where the red charcoal gleamed on rows of glass *nargilehs* hanging beneath their snake-like tubes, the maker of coffee bent over his pots of brass and copper, for all the world like an Eastern alchemist among his alembics. The sound of music rose in the night from the open terrace above the river, where singers swayed to and fro, with hands upon ears and heads thrown back to wail the quavering notes ; for only music can help those who sit alone and gaze at the swirling Tigris. That was Baghdad of other days ; splendid, from the tomb of Zobeida to the golden dome of Kazimin ; the pageant of Arabia, with no haunting mystery beneath the surface to mingle fear with love.

Cairo was also a city of the East—not so long ago—and the Muski still held treasures in its amber-scented shops, for those who showed no haste and could talk of other things. Mosques and temples possessed something of their old glamour, and the past still mingled with the present. Tragedy was not lacking in Cairo's past, bloodshed and intrigue and Caliphs going to their doom. One life at least was

given for Morocco, for we have seen how Harun-Ar-Rachid, furious at the escape of Idris, had the master of caravans beheaded. The act was surely the will of Allah, for had the poor wretch been more watchful, there would have been no Mouley Idris and perhaps no Karouiyin. But to-day the iniquity of Pharaohs and Mameluks seems to lack depth, and their history is too sun-soaked to be terrifying. Eastern Islam no longer convinces. The twentieth century has reached the heart of its great cities, and robbed them of their magic. Only in Morocco has the sense of mystery survived ; only in Fez have the centuries stood still.

In the eternal half-light of these streets round Karouiyin there was much to see and linger over. The slave-market, or rather what was once the slave-market, held a particular attraction for me. Not that there was any beauty in the tumble-down courtyard whose dingy porticoes had seen so much misery ; nor did it matter that to-day the public sale of slaves is a thing of the past. My pleasure was to muse on what had been, and to wonder how the numerous negro slaves, both male and female, find their way to Fez. There is no official answer, but I imagine that Marrakesh the gay still supplies the country's needs by secret channels from the southern tribes. Long ago there were Christian slaves, many of whom must have known the first horrors of captivity in this very place, though according to history, most of the Christians seem to have been taken in the time of Mouley Ismaïl, and were kept to work for the tireless builder of Mequinez instead of being put up for sale in this grim market-place.

While on the subject of slavery, it is interesting to note that in the towns of Morocco polygamy is becoming very rare. Two explanations are given for this : the need for economy among the poor, and the numerous negresses kept in the households of the rich.

The latter unedifying fact makes for the suppression of legitimate wives, although Islamic law has made divorce temptingly simple



THE GAUNT BATTLEMENTS OF FEZ



FEZ FROM THE SOUTH

for husbands with money to spend. I do not know if, in Morocco, the deterrent clause exists, forcing a divorced wife to marry and be divorced a second time before her first husband may take her back. It is certainly practised in other Moslem countries, but the following tale shows that even so far-reaching a precaution sometimes fails to attain its object. That there are Leilahs in Fez goes without saying. For the rest, no doubt the *souk* of the shoemakers can answer the riddle.

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A certain merchant of Algiers once found himself in a sore dilemma. Trade was bad and taxes so high that he could see no way of paying them, and unfortunately the tax-gatherer was none other than Achmed Ben Abdullah, the feared and flattered Dey of Algiers, whose appetite for money was as great as his dungeons were deep and his tortures exquisite. Now the merchant had a daughter, and it was natural that in such a difficulty his thoughts should turn to her. She was very beautiful, and her name, Leilah, meant 'of the night'; and should she find favour with the Dey perhaps he might reduce the taxes. So the great man was induced to look at Leilah through a convenient lattice, whereupon, not only was the marriage contract signed, but the taxes were completely removed from all the merchant's goods. And very soon the Dey took Leilah into his *hareem* to be the light of his eyes, the joy of his life, and the brightest star in his heaven.

Getting married is a somewhat complicated business in Moslem countries, but the ease with which a wife may be divorced leaves nothing to be desired. All you have to do, O husbands, is to repeat thrice, before witnesses, the words 'I divorce you,' and the deed is done. So far so good, but tempers are quick and something must curb them. Therefore the law insists that before a man may take back his divorced wife she must have been duly wedded to and

divorced by another. A great law indeed, but such as also served to sharpen men's inventive powers ; for its chief effect was to create that most quaint of Oriental characters, the professional bridegroom,* ready, for a consideration, to marry the pearl of anybody's *hareem* to-day, and to return her duly divorced to-morrow.

Was Leïlah somewhat of a minx ? Was the Dey unduly overbearing ? Certain it is that they quarrelled once, and then again, till the day when the irate husband called to his presence his Grand Vizir, his Barber, and the Captain of his Guard, and uttered the fatal words. Leïlah was no longer his. A couple of seconds had sufficed to rid him of her, if not for ever, at least for some time. It had all been very simple, and yet he was not satisfied. He began to think. To get her back would be easy enough, should he wish to do so. Of course she must first marry someone else—a curse on the law—but after all, such things happened every day. Soon the Dey found himself calmly considering the steps that would have to be taken, for already he wanted Leïlah back, and something told him that it was not regret alone that had taken the place of anger in his heart. Whom should she marry ? A professional ? What an indignity ! The Grand Vizir ! No ! The Captain of the Guard—good looking fellow ? A thousand times no ! Everybody seemed matrimonially suspect. It was a subject on which he could hardly consult his ministers. What would they think of a Dey who was unable to choose a husband for his divorced wife ? The hour of siesta brought no rest, and he paced nervously up and down the darkened rooms. In the palace nothing stirred, but suddenly his ear caught a sound that rose above the faint hum of the street outside. Tap, tap, tap ; tap, tap, tap ; then a pause and on again, tap, tap, tap. The Dey stood still, a frown on his face. What was this most irritating noise ? Who dared thus to disturb his mid-day repose ? Whoever it

* *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, by E. W. Lane, chapter vi.

was should suffer for his daring. He clapped his hands, and a negro guard appeared in the doorway. "You hear that noise? Bring hither the maker of it," commanded the Dey very quickly; and as quickly the doorway was empty.

He resumed his walk, and though the tapping still continued as irregularly as ever, it did not annoy him nearly so much. Had the guard heard it, he wondered? And would he find the culprit? The whole affair was rather ridiculous and lacking in dignity. How Leïlah would have laughed at his fit of temper. Leïlah! Why, he had quite forgotten her. Strange that so small a matter should banish such a great one from his mind. Leïlah! Would he never find a husband for her? As the thought flashed through his mind the tapping ceased, and a moment later came the sound of approaching footsteps. Hurriedly the Dey sought the great divan from which he was accustomed to give audience; but he was ill at ease, though the reason escaped him, and it was with an almost apologetic look that he watched the doorway.

The Grand Vizir, the Chamberlain, the Mullah*, the Captain of the Guard, the Chief Torturer, each entered in turn, and with a deep salaam passed to his accustomed place. But the Dey hardly noticed them, for at last the incomprehensible feeling within him was taking shape, and with the appearance in the doorway of two guards, he knew that he had reached the greatest moment of his life.

Between the guards stood an unknown and altogether insignificant-looking young man. He was of medium height and seemed thin in his tattered *zaaboot*†. The folds of a dirty white turban framed a face which might have been saved from ugliness by a pair of big brown eyes, had these not possessed the most irritating of all defects, an almost imperceptible squint. In one rough and bony hand he

* Priest.

† A sort of linen gown.

held a small hammer, and on his feet were the remains of what had once been a pair of yellow slippers. At a sign from the guards he knelt before the divan. There was a pause, but at last the Dey roused himself. "What is thy name?" he asked. With an indifference which caused the Chief Torturer to glance sharply in his direction, the young man shuffled to his feet. "May thy greatness be increased," he replied, slowly raising his eyes, "I am called Medoun." The Dey winced; that squint seemed to penetrate his brain; never had he experienced so disagreeable a sensation. "O Medoun," he exclaimed with growing anger, "how darest thou disturb my rest?" "I work, O protector of the poor." "At what calling?" "I am a cobbler," replied Medoun, letting his uncertain gaze flutter for a moment round the room. The Dey was furious. "Knowest thou not, son of a burnt mother," he thundered, "that at mid-day I rest, and that those within my hearing must be silent? Knowest thou not what all Algiers knows?" "Hear me, O Sidi Achmed Ben Abdullah, Lord of all Algiers," cried Medoun, bowing once more to the ground; "in silence I cannot work; and if I work not, how will the little slippers ever be ready for the great ladies of thy *hareem*? And how shall I eat and live if the work remain unfinished?" "My *hareem*—the ladies of my *hareem*," murmured the Dey as if in a dream, and silently his lips formed the word 'Leïlah.' "It is even so," continued the cobbler; "at this moment there is a pair which must be finished quickly. On them I was hammering when thy guards came and brought me hither."

"Hers, perhaps," thought the Dey; and all at once the problem that had been so troublesome solved itself like mist in the sun, and he heaved a deep sigh of relief. "*El Hamdulilah*,"* answered the courtiers politely, and relapsed into silence. The Dey smiled. The storm had passed. "Art thou married?" he asked, and his

* "Praise be to God."

voice was almost paternal. Medoun shook his head. "Then," continued the Dey triumphantly, "thou shalt marry here and now. Such is my will." A murmur of astonishment and admiration broke from the crowd as it began to understand. Here was wisdom ; here was wit. Who but the Dey could have chosen so well ? Only the prospective bridegroom seemed greatly distressed. Prostrate once more on the ground, he cried out in protest, "Be merciful, my Lord, force me not to marry. Why should I take a woman who will quarrel and hinder my work ? Kill me rather." Assuming his most judicial air, the Dey lifted his right hand. "I have spoken, O Medoun the Cobbler, and thou shalt marry ; but"—and he leaned forward slightly and dropped his voice—"thou shalt also divorce." Medoun started. "When ?" he muttered ; "when ?" The Dey hesitated. It would never do to precipitate matters ; everything must be done with propriety. "When the pair of slippers on which thou workest is ready," he almost whispered, "then divorce thy wife and be free once more." A look of relief came into the brown eyes. In the happiness of their depths the squint was forgotten, and as he stood erect in his tattered clothes Medoun looked almost handsome.

Meanwhile, preparations for the wedding were quickly made. There was much giving of orders and running to and fro, and officials assumed the important air reserved for great occasions. In the *hareem* all was bustle and excitement. Old women prepared the *kohl* and the *henna*, while younger ones sought out rich veils and embroideries with which to adorn the bride ; and all chattered like birds in the early morning. Medoun, too, had undergone a transformation at the hands of the Court officials. A silken *kuftan* with red and green stripes, and a turban of finest Kashmir replaced the rags of a moment ago, and it was indeed a changed man who joined the procession that was to escort him home, there

to await the coming of his bride. With due solemnity the Dey presented the gold-embroidered bag containing the dowry. "Remember," he repeated, "when the slippers are finished thou wilt divorce her." It was absurd how anxious he felt. "By Allah," came the reply, "I promise"; and with a last deep salaam Medoun was gone.

Comfortably settled among his cushions, the Dey gave himself up to visions of the future. To-morrow, or at least the day after, Leïlah would be his once more. The festivities would certainly surpass in magnificence any of his previous weddings. And there would be no more quarrelling, for he recognised now that he, and not Leïlah, had been to blame. He would load her with presents, though in truth it was difficult to think of an adequate gift for such a reunion. And so he pondered, one idea following another, till at length came the thought of a perfect setting for his love, a palace for Leïlah among gardens and fountains, with courts and terraces of gleaming marble and many-coloured tiles, a fairyland where he could adore his treasure. How blind he had been to her charms, how mad to put her away even for a moment. But she would return; and already he pictured himself on the white terrace, with Leïlah by his side in the moonlight. Looking down upon the garden below, they would catch glimpses of white arches ablaze with passion flowers and roses, and hear faint sounds of clear water splashing in a basin resplendent with old Arab faience. The beauty of the dream gardens must be abiding: green and gold, a brilliance at mid-day, a patchwork of shimmering silver and black at night. The palace must be secluded, remote. In years to come passers-by straying up from the orange groves and vine-clad slopes, would look curiously at the doorways half-hidden in the creeper-covered walls and wonder what secret lay behind them; a fairyland, truly, for Leïlah his love.

But all at once the sound of approaching music broke his reverie. Only too well he knew its meaning—the departure of the bride for the house of the bridegroom—and above the beating of drums and the plaintive wail of reed pipes, the strange scales and quivering trills of the voices rose and fell in praise of Leïlah. Springing to his feet, the Dey watched the doorway. On they came : the wild-eyed tom-tom players stamping to the gradually quickening rhythm ; the singers, their heads thrown back and their ears covered with their hands, their bodies swaying from side to side ; the negro slaves carrying silver trays piled high with embroidered linen ; the sprinklers of rose-water and the sprinklers of orange-flower-water ; the bearers of great perfuming vessels filled with burning incense ; and at last, between flaming *mech'als* or torches, and beneath a canopy of rose-coloured silk, the bride, supported and almost carried by a group of women, her beauty hidden by a thick golden veil, and with two great jewels of diamonds and emeralds flashing on her forehead. The Dey watched in silence ; etiquette forbade that he should speak or make any sign, but he thought that Leïlah turned slightly towards him as she passed. It all happened very quickly, and before he could make up his mind, the procession had disappeared. Medoun was gone, and Leïlah was gone, and the street outside was filled with the cries of the singers and the red glare of the torches ; and above it all he seemed to hear the tapping of a hammer.

The rest of the story needs but little telling. In the early morning the Dey sought out the cobbler's house and found it silent and closely shuttered. When he returned next day, Medoun was working in the shop. Bowing to the ground he silently pointed to a pair of unfinished slippers hanging on the wall beside him. There was no need for words. The Dey knew that here at last was something greater than all his power, and that Leïlah would never return to

him. Medoun had beaten him at his own game ; there was no escape from the fact. For a moment thoughts of vengeance rose in his mind, but he dismissed them ; being a Dey he must show generosity, and being a man he would guard one little ray of hope in his heart. And so it came about that the fairy palace was finished, and by the Dey's command Medoun and Leilah went to live there. In the courtyard the cobbler worked and the hammer tapped ; and when each day at sunset a messenger came on a white mule with gorgeous trappings, led by an ebony slave, to ask in his master's name if a certain pair of slippers was ready, the answer never varied.

Sometimes at night a shadowy figure would stand by the little door in the wall of the *hareem* garden. It held the key, but the lock turned in vain, for on the other side the bolt had been drawn across for ever. And even now they say that when mid-day is very still, and heavy with the scent of flowers, one can sometimes hear the faint tap of a hammer, just as the Dey first heard it ; and when it ceases there comes a still fainter ripple of laughter.

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There are places in Fez where the buildings almost join high overhead, blotting out the sky and assuming fantastic proportions. Each storey juts out beyond the one below, till the street seems crushed beneath their toppling weight. Foot passengers are not cared for in Fez, for I discovered that the only limit to the narrowness of its mole runs is that a fully loaded camel shall be able to pass through them. That may be so, but I know alleys where the load would have to be a very small one, and the passers-by of unnatural flatness ; and apparently what the builders do above the height of the loaded camel is of no matter. Sometimes it seems as if this narrowness and squalor were meant to increase the contrast between the luxury of the rich householders and the world outside. I have knocked at a small nail-studded door at the end of the deepest and most repulsive

cul-de-sac, and been admitted to several arcaded courtyards, adorned with marble fountains and mosaic and panels of plaster-work, and with at least three storeys of apartments surrounding them. At night one may see the wealthiest merchant emerge from the poorest-looking alley on his way to some feast or entertainment, an impassive figure swathed in the voluminous folds of a white *djellaba* and mounted upon a white mule. Has he left all well in the house? His living treasures safely guarded in the upper floors? That he shall know anon—after the feast.

Lanterns precede him, carried on the heads of negro slaves, the typical brass lanterns of Fez that play such a great part in processions and entertainments. These lanterns are either four-sided or octagonal, with a high, dome-shaped roof, decorated, in the case of the older ones, with very beautiful pierced work. In a town devoid of public lighting they began as a necessity, which among the rich and aristocratic Fasis soon grew into a costly luxury. A man's importance could be judged by his lanterns, some of which stood nearly three feet high and contained as many as ten candles. They are still universally used in Fez, and the yellow lights, flickering on the white-robed *cortège* as it passes through the vaulted streets, form one of the city's weirdest scenes.

The finest display of lanterns I ever saw was at a reception given one summer night by a Court official in his beautiful house at Fez Djedid. It was not only a social function, but an event of the highest artistic importance, at which the orchestras of Fez and Tlemcen competed for first place in the Moroccan musical world, and the choicest dancers displayed their charms to a critical audience. The scene in the great arcaded courtyard was one of those to which no description can do justice. In the blaze of violently contrasted colour, detail became hopelessly elusive, but the ensemble attained a perfection undreamed of by our greatest stage-managers, and the

lanterns of Fez performed a miracle no electrician could ever hope for. They were placed on the ground all round the courtyard, great and small, some of brass and some even mounted in silver. A few stood on the edge of the central fountain, and from the high, open doorways of the rooms within the cloisters came beams of yellow light, covering the ranks of white burnous with a veil of gold. On one side were seated venerable greybeards whose function it was to dispense the tea of hospitality to the guests ; for on such occasions the making of tea is no menial office, but is confided to intimate friends of the host. The tea-trays were of silver, with silver samovars and teapots, and close by stood silver incense-burners and long-necked scent-sprinklers. Grouped in either corner, opposite the tea-makers, the musicians of Fez and Tlemcen waged a battle of sound. How should I judge of their music ? There were moments of plaintive wailing, when one would have thought they were trying to remember some northern folk-song ; but these calm pools were short lived. Mad fury followed, cataclysms of sound, shreds of Strauss and Stravinsky, shadows of Bax, tossing among the classic scales of Cairo till it seemed impossible that either performers or audience could bear another note. The audience, however, took a different view of the matter, for it was not until late in the evening that all was ended and the honour of Fez secure. Tlemcen, my host informed me, had imagination, but failed sadly in technique. I was not surprised, and replied truthfully that even I had found something wrong with Tlemcen's performance.

If the music was a trial, the instruments were a delight, and the wonderful dexterity of the musicians explained the difficulty of judging them. They play and sing at the same time, with head thrown back and a strange unseeing look in their eyes. I have always thought that the ecstatic state of singers all over the East must be caused by drugs, and the appearance of these Moors only strengthened that

opinion. The violins made me feel covetous, so wonderful were the designs of mother-o'-pearl inlaid upon them ; and the other stringed instruments, something like mandolins, but broader, were equally decorated and equally tempting. On the other hand the drum, such an important member of Arab orchestras, played an almost insignificant part. "Why are there no wind instruments ?" somebody asked me during a particularly *fortissimo* passage. "Surely there ought to be some." To such an improvident question there could be but one reply. "This is not a full orchestra," I shouted back.

The dancers sat on cushions by the fountain. There were seven of them, unveiled and unattractive except the central one, who appeared to be the *première danseuse*. Perhaps she had followed the practice of her European sisters and surrounded herself with mediocrities in order to prevent comparison. Hers was a wild beauty ; and the sight of her languorous eyes beneath the long black eyebrows, with cheeks of pure vermillion and lines of blue tattooed on arms and forehead, made the singer's glances wilder and the greybeards' hands shake as they poured the tea. The dancing was a disappointment, consisting of the continuous rhythmic undulations accompanied by the tapping of small drums, to be seen in any Arab town. There may have been intricacies which escaped me, movements that held a hidden meaning ; but to my ignorance they seemed monotonous, and not even the *première danseuse* could cause a thrill. I much preferred to watch her by the fountain, warming her tiny drum over the smoking brazier, like a pagan goddess in a cloud of incense, than standing erect and wriggling her body round by inches, a manœuvre which seemed to be the climax of terpsichorean art in Fez.

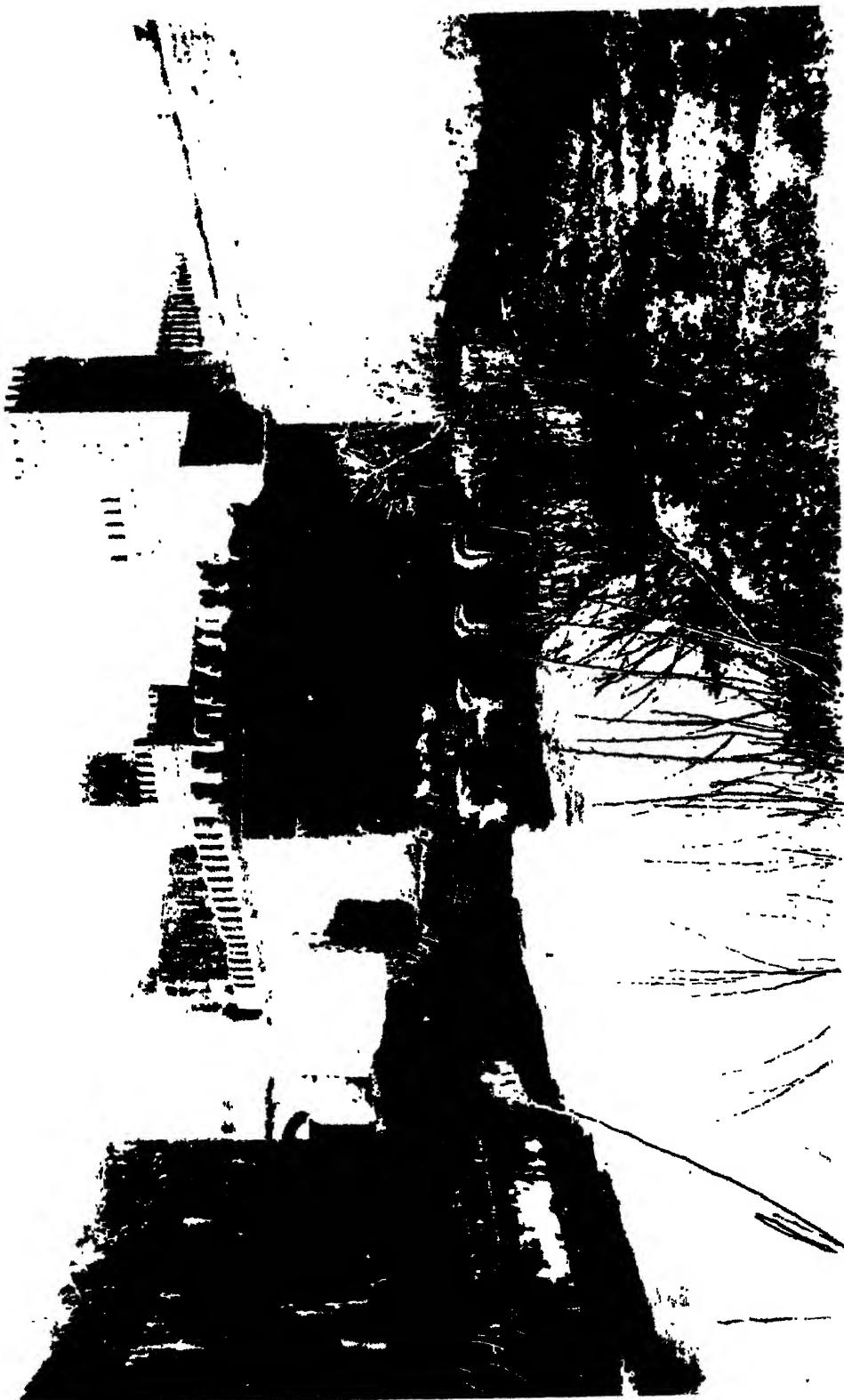
"A glass of champagne," said a voice in my ear, and there in an inner room was champagne, waiting in thin-stemmed glasses

for the laughing crowd of officers and government officials, with here and there the gleam of white shoulders and the glitter of jewels to remind one of unveiled Paris. The transition was so sudden that I thought I must be dreaming. I was wrong. This was civilisation, and in the courtyard outside my dream was fading, impotent against the popping corks of Europe.

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From the earliest days of its existence Fez possessed the complete machinery of municipal government ; the chief power, so far as commerce was concerned, being vested in the Provost of the merchants. One of his duties was to control the measurements used for the sale of cloth, and three royal standard measures given by the Sultans for that purpose are still to be seen. The first is hidden away in the back room of a shop in the little market of the *henna* merchants, a strange place to find a standard measure, though in this case it is there with good reason. The market is steeped in romance, for in Morocco, as indeed in all Arab countries, *henna* is considered a sign and joy and seduction, and plays an important part in the life of the woman. The *henna* merchants know all the intrigues that surround the society marriages of Fez. When a bride performs the ceremony of the Grand *Henna* the day before she goes to her husband, it is here that the *hennayas* or *henna* stainers, buy the powdered root, and these ladies are notoriously talkative. The application of *henna* on this special occasion is a delicate operation. To stain the hands and feet in the ordinary way is easy enough, but only the *hennayas* have the secret of the designs most seductive to the bridegroom when he sets eyes on his bride for the first time, and the women present her to him with the words, 'Behold her sweet beauty ! Behold she is delicate as the date and fine as amber !' The cunning curves and arabesques, displayed on the arms and legs of the bride, help, no doubt, to make the bridegroom

THE RAMPARTS AND THE OUED FEZ

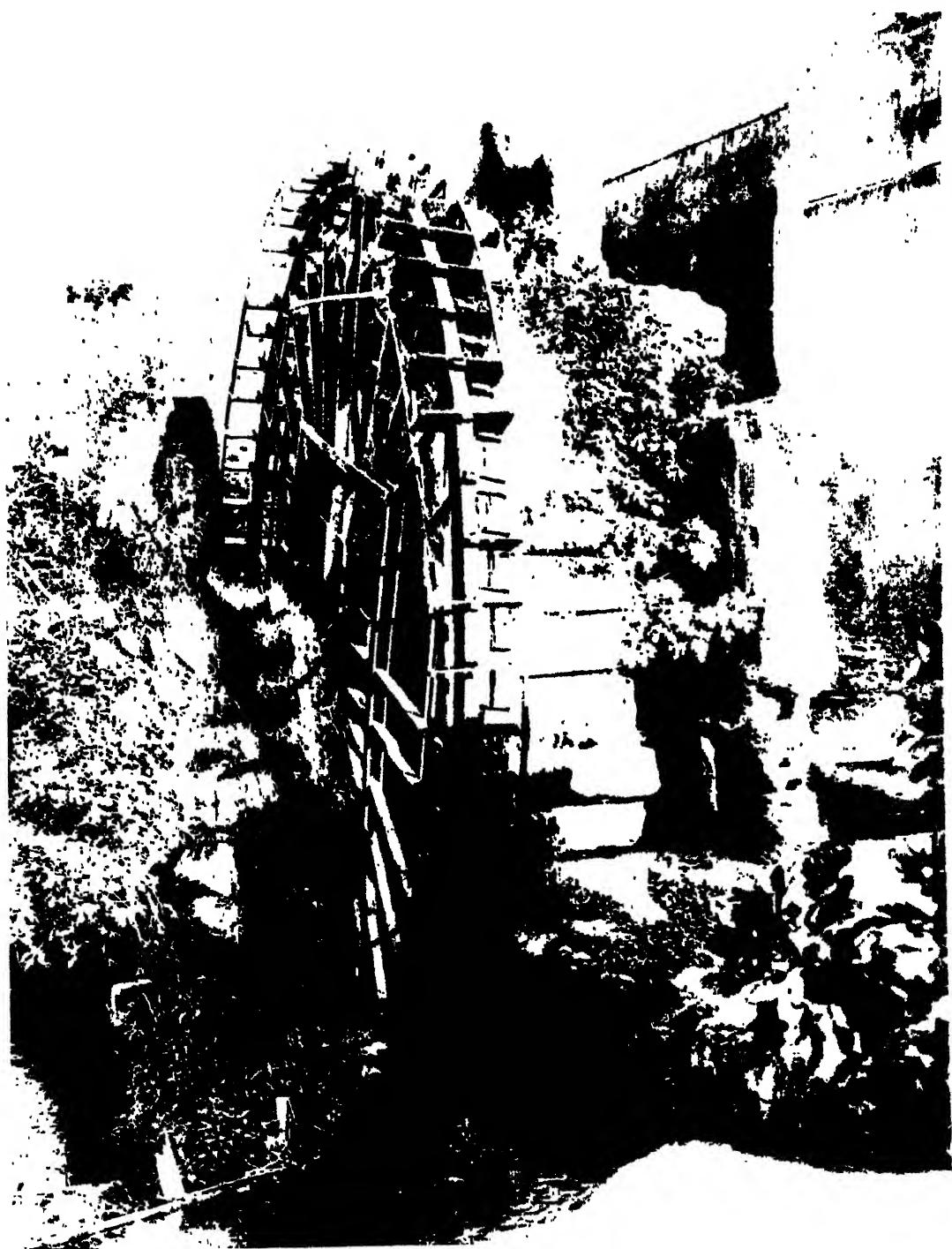


forget that he must bring a dowry, while she needs none ; but on the other hand, he has the right to limit the visits of his mother-in-law, a clause in the marriage contract which might prove popular in non-Moslem countries. I must not stray into a description of the marriage ceremonies of the Fasis. They are to be found in other works on Morocco, and the shop in the *henna* market is our present objective. Fixed in the wall of the room at the back of it is an inscribed marble tablet with an incised mark exactly 46 centimetres (18 inches) in length, which served as a standard for the measures used by the merchants of woollen cloth. Until a few years ago this room was the office of the Provost of merchants, and the inscription tells us that the tablet was placed there by the Sultan Abou Inan to encourage honesty and to prevent fraud. Two other standard measures exist in Fez, one, also due to Abou Inan, conveniently placed on the wall between two shops of the Souk El Attarin, showing a length of 46 centimetres, while the other, just above a modern letter-box in the *souk* of cotton merchants, measures 55 centimetres. This last tablet is not nearly as old as the others, dating from the reign of Sultan Suleiman (1792), and the difference of 9 centimetres in the length is explained by the fact that one measure served for woollen cloth (46 centimetres), generally a native product woven at Fez, and the other (55 centimetres) for the cottons and silks of European importation. The merchants certainly showed a practical turn of mind in having standard measures placed where they could be easily reached in case of dispute. In England we keep our yard measure in the Houses of Parliament, buried in the wall of the staircase to the Committee Rooms, a rather inconvenient position for the doubting purchaser of cloth in Kensington. On the other hand, while a marble yard placed on the wall outside our great stores might prove of interest to future antiquarians, there are blocked pavements and the well-known integrity of

merchant princes to be taken into present consideration. Neither of these things matter in Fez, so no doubt we have both got what we deserve.

Fez is a city of magic. Most of its spells are obscure in their working, but one is apparent to all—the rushing of water. I approach the subject with hesitation, because it is a theme never absent from descriptions of the city, a striking feature of its life that all must partake of, for preference spiritually. Still, there may be things that others have left unsaid. Who would think that the peaceful stream, flowing between green meadows in the plain of the Saïs above the city, is about to become a hundred rushing torrents a little farther on? While within the grounds of the Imperial Palace it manages to behave with becoming decorum, but already there is wickedness in it. Somewhere it divides into two, or perhaps three, branches, a fatal mistake to make. It is the first step on the downward path, and in Fez nature has made that path both easy and rapid. From its dividing point the river is bewitched beyond recall. I know its channels in the wild lands between the *mellah* and Bou Jeloud where it runs at the foot of gaunt battlements with nothing but wild land behind them. There it begins to hurry, passing under low bridges and through great water-wheels in whose clutches some of it is drawn up and made to start upon other hidden journeys, while the greater part splashes back into the old stream and runs on faster and faster.

Somewhere the Oued Fez vanishes beneath the earth. I have tried in vain to find the spot, but the djinns keep changing it in the most bewildering manner. Water rushes through the gardens of Bou Jeloud, of that I am certain. It is in the courts of the French Residency, and some of it goes along an almost rural lane outside; but these are only branches, for the main stream is already underground and invisible. Its pranks have begun, and if it can no longer



THE WATER WHEEL

be seen it takes care to be heard. Would you walk along some deserted way between high, sun-bathed walls ? A gurgling melody goes with you— indefinite, elusive. When the streets steepen, diving into darkness beneath the houses, then the water shows what stuff it is made of and shouts a lusty welcome that is also a warning. It is there, to right and to left and underneath, throwing gusts of cold air in your face, but who can find it ? Once, the water supply of Fez must have been almost perfect, for there were special channels bringing pure water to every house, and a separate drainage system to carry it away. But alas, such perfection is a thing of the past. The conduits ran alongside each other ; leakages were frequent and repairs rare ; under new buildings pipes got hopelessly muddled and lost, till to-day it is best to content oneself with the symphony of the water if one would escape unscathed. If the romance of fountains were ever written, Fez would hold no mean place in its pages. No two are alike, each having its special charm. One I know that consists of a simple stone trough beside an archway. It is a dark corner, where the conduit has burst in the wall, and a trickle comes from beneath the peeling plaster. The edge of the trough is worn away and covered with a patch of green slime, and what water has not been lost *en route* falls from a round hole in the wall, with the impress of a Hand of Fatima close beside it. No sunlight can ever reach the fountain, but at mid-day it just touches the other side of the archway. There an old beggar sits eternally. When the sun comes he curls himself in his *djellaba* and sleeps. When it has gone he stretches out his hand and waits motionless. A loaded camel passes under the arch, and its driver, turning aside to drink, leans over the trough with one hand on its edge and the other pressed over the Hand of Fatima. Then the beggar awakes. “ The blessing of Mouley Idris on the giver to the poor,” he mumbles, moving his outstretched arm to and fro while the driver drinks long and deeply.

At last he turns to look, wiping the drops from his lips. "May Mouley Idris assist thee, for I cannot," he says and runs after his camel, while the beggar's mumbling gradually ceases, and only the trickle of water breaks the silence.

There are fountains of marble and fountains of faience, with panels of plaster-work and canopies of carved cedar that make them look like shrines ; fountains in every mosque and medersa ; fountains by each *fondak*. The jewel that glitters at the gate of Nejjarin counts as the show fountain of Fez, but it has a rival that wanderers will no doubt come upon as unexpectedly as I did. Will they share my opinion, I wonder ? If they do it will be that they have watched the fountain's life, for adornment it has none to recommend it. But in its oblong trough, with arched end and deep cedar superstructure crowned by a roof of grass-grown tiles, there is dignity that makes the other seem almost insignificant. Nejjarin is the plaything of a rich corporation, a private affair like the great *fondak* beside it ; this belongs to the people, a thing for use and not for ornament in the city's daily life. I wish I knew what street leads to the tiny square with this fountain at its corner. It must be an important thoroughfare, for every tribe seems represented in it. Arabs, Berbers, and Sudanese jostle each other and crowd against the walls to let the mules and camels with their rocking loads pass majestically towards Bab El Gisa, where most of the *fondaks* are. Vines grow on trellis-work across the street, and the ripening bunches hang where the smoke from a cook-shop will add the flavour of spice to the grapes. One could pick them from mule-back, and make a rare vintage grown in the streets of Fez, were wine not sinful. It is astonishing how few faces can be seen in the crowd. Fez has enshrouded its people with an air of mystery and draped them like phantoms, and only the children forget and let their *djellabas* slip down on naked shoulders as they play by the fountain. An eye is



THE PEOPLE'S FOUNTAIN

all one sees of the women, but like the water they come to fetch, endless chatter flows from beneath their veils, and the fountain must hear a lot of scandal. Even the men seem to delight in seeing without being seen, for rarely does more than a wagging beard or a hawk-like nose appear from under the hooded burnous. But veiled or unveiled, all are picturesque, moving with that typical Eastern activity that leads nowhere ; and it is only when the meaning of my camera dawns upon them that there comes a pause, cutting short the choicest gossip of the ladies and warning me not to linger.

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The ladies ! Two words to remind me that it is time to invade their stronghold, for they have a stronghold where no man may penetrate save their lord and master. Even he rarely appears there, and when he does there is tragedy in the air—for someone. Let us invade it all the same, keeping well under cover lest ill befall us, and view the world from the women's outlook, the terraces of Fez. There is a story of two Englishmen, ardent students of all things Moroccan, who determined to get a close view of the beauties of a neighbouring *hareem* when they should take their airing on the terrace. Nothing daunted by accounts of the dreadful consequences were they discovered, they hid themselves before dawn under two large market-baskets placed in a prominent position upon their own roof, and prepared to await events. The hours of burning heat passed slowly, and yet the watchers dared not move for fear of discovery or of missing the fair ones of their dreams. Towards evening, when they were almost baked, a tiny door leading from a staircase opened and two women appeared. Soon they unveiled. Alas that the world should contain such ugliness ! From other doors came other women, each older and less charming than the last, laughing and pointing mockingly towards the market-baskets on the only empty terrace. This went on till at last night hid all from view.

Then the gallants emerged from their hiding-place faint and feverish, though it was no fever of love that consumed them. They had thought to be amused, but the laugh was with the ladies, for news travels only too swiftly on the terraces.

Besides being a playground where the veil may be thrown aside and dresses and jewels displayed and compared, the terraces serve as a private way for the exchange of visits between neighbours, and even more distant houses are reached by climbing up and down to the different roof levels and crossing the streets on the numerous archways. 'The Moors' women are jealously guarded,' say the old chronicles, and I looked at the low dividing walls and wondered at the blindness of man in general and of the man who wrote that in particular. The tale remains the same all the world over, but perhaps of all its settings a terrace in the heart of Old Fez is the most perfect ; for beneath an appearance of sullenness, the city hides a surprisingly amorous heart, that beats quickly when the moon has just been born and the breath of the snowy Atlas comes to cool the summer nights.

Then the tiny staircase door opens, and Leïlah or Ayesha or Lalla Meimouna—whichever lovely name is hers—comes on to the terrace. Her flowing robe is white, embroidered with much gold ; she has golden bracelets on her arms, and golden ornaments beneath her *hantouz* with its flowing veils. Slowly she moves forward and leans on the parapet, listening to the sound of music in the distant house where her lord and master has been bidden to a feast. *Insh' Allah*, may it last the night ! An ancient negress emerges from the staircase and squats beside it. The *henna* merchants know her, though her business in the market has not been with them alone. Many men lingered before the shops, and among them one who loves her mistress. A quickly whispered message, and now he is moving like a shadow across the roofs. At the dividing wall he hesitates,

THE TERRACES OF FEZ



and with the faint tinkle of silver anklets his love goes toward him. . . .

From the darkness of the staircase a voice counsels care, for, alas, time cannot stand still, and the moon, high above the hill of Zalagh, adds the warning of its rays. The distant house is silent now ; the master may return at any moment. O romantic terraces of Fez, must you also have your tragedies ? "Quick," comes the cry, "he is below" ; and yet the clasped figures refuse to move. Will Allah not cover the moon, put out the stars ? . . .

From the minaret a man looks down upon the city. His is the only terrace in Fez untrodden by a woman's foot. The worldly terraces lie beneath him, a thousand white-rimmed patches of grey. How often have they teemed with the life that he alone can watch unchallenged, but now they are deserted save for these two. The *mueddin* raises his arms and turns towards the east. "*Allahu Akbar*," rings out the cry ; "*Allahu Akbar*, God is greater." . . . There is yet time to pray.

The *mueddin* has disappeared within his tower, and the figures have gone from the terrace. In the absolute silence a stork on the high ramparts of Fez Djedid changes from one long leg to the other, snapping his beak with the sound of a breaking bow-string. Suddenly a scream rises shrill and frantic from the depths of the city ; then another—faint this time—and all is still again. Yet the silence is not quite complete, for in the cool breeze from the Atlas one seems to hear the voices of Isolde and Desdemona, and of Melisande.

CHAPTER VIII

A VIEW AND SIDI HARAZEM

TO the north of Fez rises a mountain known as the Zalagh, from which one gets the most satisfying view of the city. Beyond the ponderous Bab Mahrouk—towards evening when the shadows begin to slant—the hillside spreads its olive-covered ravines and its uplands of reddish earth clothed with cactus. It is a desolate scene. One feels that outside the ramparts is not a safe place in Morocco. In the old days the people who lived ‘in the country’ needed the grim line of heads set on spikes above the gate to remind them that rebellion was wrong and that the Sultan was lord of all the land and not of the towns alone. Even now, only foreigners and the dead have their dwellings on the hills round Fez. In the former we have no interest, but in the tombs of holy men and sages and Emirs that stand beside those of the rank and file of the people lies all the city’s story. Sidi this and Sidi that, little white *koubbas* among the olives ; and as one mounts higher more cemeteries become visible, away on the other side of Fez, filled with much more important *koubbas*. Some of the most famous professors from Karouiyin are buried over there, and their monuments have quite an academic pretentiousness, a few even affecting the form of the shrine of Mouley Idris. But the Zalagh also has its famous dead, and with the tombs of the Merinide Emirs on its flank it can smile complacently at any cemetery within sight.

THE PATH TO THE MERINIDE TOMBS



There is a motor-road round Fez, but for the evening view I counsel Shanks's mare, or in very extreme cases a mule, as means of transport. Outside Bab Mahrouk a path turns to the right. Take it, and wander down the ravine and up the hill, with the ramparts that hide the mosques and shrines and medersas of Fez on one side, and on the other, high against the sky-line, the tombs of the men who made those great and beautiful things. The Merinide tombs ! One conjures up visions of gold and carving and marble ; of inscriptions full of high-sounding phrases—Our Master ; the Pontiff ; the Ornament of our Time ; Soldier of War in the Path of Allah ; May Allah make his Empire continue ; and many others—among the flowers and arabesques of the tombstones. In reality there is nothing of all this, for the tombs are but immense ruins with no sign of former splendour. Yet if ' May Allah make his Empire continue ' was ever carved on the marble, that prayer at least has been answered. One has only to turn one's back on the departed Emirs to see Fez spread out in the valley, still living and still splendid.

How well the Moors had grasped the art of choosing a site for their cities ! Not even the Romans could show better taste. One might mention numbers of splendidly situated Moorish towns, but Fez suffices. Blot out a few, a very few, buildings in the old town ; remove the newer constructions of Fez Djedid ; and the scene must be much the same as our young friend Abou Inan Farés looked upon when he rode out to take the air in the cool of the evening, surrounded by his courtiers and the *oulema* of his beloved medersa. With all his faults he was a great ruler ; and to die as he did, strangled in his old age by his most trusted courtiers, seems an unjust end for the creator of so much beauty. I wonder if his grave is under one of the ruined *koubbas* ?

The minaret of the Bouananiya is plainly visible on the right, just where the descent from Fez Djedid begins. In the centre, unmistakable even to the merest infidel, Mouley Idris rears its

pointed green-tiled roof and tall minaret above the crowded houses. Beside it the plain grey minaret of Karouiyin seems a poor thing for so famous a seat of learning, while still farther east the gateway of El Andalous throws the great shadow of its arch, like the entrance to a gigantic tunnel in the hillside. In the other direction the twentieth century is hardly more apparent, though one knows that somewhere beyond the cypresses and minarets of the Dar El Makhzen there is a camp and a railway-station and the beginnings of yet a newer Fez. The eye roams over the picture in its frame of high ramparts and olive-groves and cemeteries, recognising known landmarks, seeking new ones, but instinctively returning to that pointed, green roof, that centre of gravity from which nothing in Fez can stray far or for long. The tomb of its founder is not only the glory of Fez, but the longed for goal of every traveller who approaches the city. At the first sight of the sanctuary the devout Moroccan will invoke the intercession of Mouley Idris on his behalf. He would probably do so if it were only a poor grave in the desert, but here nothing has been neglected to increase his devotion. It is extraordinary how religion nearly always manages to be effective architecturally. The lay architect may have genius in him, but the designer of cathedrals possesses more than genius, both in actual building and in choice of site. He has a devotional judgment which is apparent in all countries and in all creeds.

Beyond the Merinide tombs the path leads down to Bab El Gisa, with its imposing arch and its story-teller among the tombs. This part of Fez is very ancient, and according to tradition, neither walls nor gateway have been touched since they were built eight hundred years ago. Some of the high, crumbling towers look even older than that, but what does age matter when the story-teller's tales remain as young as when there were no walls round Fez ? They give a gaiety to the cemetery, keep it in touch with life so to speak, and no doubt many departed spirits listen among the audience. Nobody



STORKS AT SIDI HARAZEM

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tells stories at the royal *koubbas* up above. That may be the punishment reserved for Emirs, but with so many beautiful things to their credit it seems a hard one.

There are two Sidi Harazems. One was a sage who taught under the arches of Karouiyin and is buried outside Bab Fetouh. The other was also a sage, and beyond that fact little is known about him. He has his *zaouia* at a tiny Berber village just off the road to Taza, about eight miles from Fez, and the day I spent there is a delightful memory. Not that Sidi Harazem has anything very wonderful or very beautiful to offer. Far from it. The only building it possesses is the tomb of the Saint, a modest affair of brick and plaster that seems superb beside the surrounding huts of mud and palm leaves. There you have it. Palm leaves form half the secret of Sidi Harazem, the other half is storks. Strictly speaking Sidi Harazem has no business at all in this part of Morocco, and if the storks have a reason for invading Sidi Harazem, it is not apparent. The whole thing is delightful but wrong, and that, I suppose, is the reason why I enjoyed it. From Bab Fetouh down into the valley of the Sebou the landscape is truly Moroccan, with olive-groves and barren hillsides and some cultivated land by the river ; but when the track enters the deep gorge leading to Sidi Harazem, the miracle happens. Morocco disappears and an oasis straight from the Sahara takes its place. The effect is surprising. Here is a grove of splendid palms, and yet Fez with its European vegetation is only a couple of hours distant. It is like leaving Calais in the afternoon and finding one's self on the Riviera next morning. Sidi Harazem is not only a pleasant change, it is also a bit of the South, a reminder that a part of Morocco exists where sand and date palms are the rule, not the exception. Furthermore it is the headquarters of the storks, the metropolis of these ungainly visitors from Europe that seem out of place anywhere in Morocco, but are absolutely ridiculous in an oasis of date-palms.

Were a novelist to write of 'the storks flapping among the date-palms,' he or she would be dubbed a Munchausen; only Ouida dared to make statements of such unlikelihood. Yet, at Sidi Harazem, the storks do flap among the palms. Each hut has its nest of great birds on the roof, and the snapping of their beaks is the accompaniment of all other sounds in the oasis. The natives declare that they only remain from January till May, but my visit was in July and they showed no signs of departing. Besides date-palms and storks, Sidi Harazem possesses a third attraction, in the shape of a hot spring, which probably explains the presence of the other two. Curiously enough there are no signs of the Roman remains one would expect in such a place. It was too far from the line of garrisons to be worth holding against the wild Berbers, and the Romans already had an excellent hot spring, fitted with a bathing pool, in the gorge of the Oued Faraoun. Sidi Harazem is not envious. Bathing without a bath is the order of the day, as the photograph shows. I am not sure whether it is mixed bathing or not, but in any case there are no restrictions as to costume, and the storks look on with evident approval.

It was evening when I got back to Fez, and passed from Bab Fetouh along the hillside where a great fort guards the city on the south. The view was perhaps even more wonderful than from the north. Not only did the Oued Fez come rushing down from the invisible plain of the Saïs, but a cascade of innumerable terraces covered the whole hillside, losing itself at my feet in the deep ravine filled with gardens and orchards. In the cup of the valley, Fez El Bali was already in shadow. Gradually, mosques and minarets grew blurred and indistinct, till only one pointed, green roof stood out, still vivid in the sea of grey. For a moment the darkness remained stationary, as if hesitating to engulf the sanctuary. Then even Mouley Idris disappeared, and only the black crest of Zalagh loomed against the sky.



THE TOMB OF SIDI HARAZEM

CHAPTER IX

THE DREAM OF MARRAKESH

TO me, Marrakesh is a place apart, outside Morocco, the prelude to a fairy country hidden away somewhere in the furnace of the desert, or amid the glittering whiteness of the snows. From what strange countries have they come, these men one meets in Marrakesh ? From what hard existence do they seek the joys of the city ? Pleasure comes first in Marrakesh. Is not the great market-square known as the Assembly of Marvels ? And are not the palms of the oasis higher and the orange-groves thicker than anywhere in the world ? From the purely artistic standpoint the southern capital should be visited last, because of its great contrast to the rest of the country. It completes a series of impressions ; the furtive mystery of Fez, the desolation of Mequinez, the charm of Rabat. Casablanca conveys no impression. It is a necessary nightmare to be forgotten as soon as may be. So the traveller turns south among barren hills, and reaches at last the gap where he looks down upon Marrakesh, the Morocco City of old, half hidden behind its curtain of palms, like a desert bride, fearful of her northern master. In spite of a few green-tiled roofs and the towering Koutoubia, the scene is the familiar East of our dreams, a jumble of sand and palms, colour and odour, beauty and misery. I do not think that any detailed description of Marrakesh can be satisfying. It should rather remain a dream, in which each must

seek what reality he will, and carry away the treasure that most appeals to him ; for of every dream we are allowed to keep some part that will be a joy for ever if we have chosen rightly.

In the midst of a sea of palms and olives rise the lines of towering ramparts that we have already seen at Fez and Mequinez, but this time they rise with a difference. Their southern setting has transformed them. Again the 'wall feeling,' that invariable accompaniment of approach, is present, but in a milder form. This time we are not oppressed, but only soothed, and the dream goes on, with vistas of open spaces among the palms, and ruins that have been something long ago. A broad avenue lined with European houses leads towards the walls. Why do the Moors call them red ? They are brown, save at sunset, when they glow crimson beneath the purple and white of the distant snows.

The way passes under the walls by a great double-angled gate, doubtless the work of Youssef Ben Tachfine, founder of the city. What volumes might be written about gateways ! Did not the Moslem fugitives from Spain bring with them the splendid arch of the *kasbah*, and rebuild it, stone by stone, where no Spaniard could follow ? Now it guards the great enclosure, whose green-tiled roofs tell of imperial state in empty mechouars, and whose forest of palms and olives stretches towards the mountains, with here and there cypresses rising like black pillars above the green and grey. Yes, Marrakesh is a pleasant place in which to dream and idle, full of the charm of Morocco with the added magic of the desert and the South. Even the excellent hotel is not out of the picture, and who can blame the enterprising spirits who have started a tea-room with pretty things for sale ? There they serve tea in china cups, with milk, a strange luxury that the infidel demands when he goes on a journey. Marrakesh ignores such things. It will offer you the mint-scented tea of Morocco in the market-square of Djamaa El Fna, when the

drums beat at sunset and the crowd sways between jugglers and snake-charmers. There you may sip the golden beverage, and watch lean men swallow impossible things in the sight of all, while the dancers turn and undulate and the story-tellers weave a chanting spell over their audience.

Incidents these, gaily coloured pieces of the puzzle that gradually find their places and are lost in the picture. I have said that of every dream we may carry away something that cannot fade. Of Marrakesh three things live in my memory, a tower, a palace, and a tomb, different in all respects save in the tale they tell. And there is something else, something that no longer exists, yet dominates them all by the sheer force of its vanished splendour. Its place is last, for it is the true dream of Marrakesh.

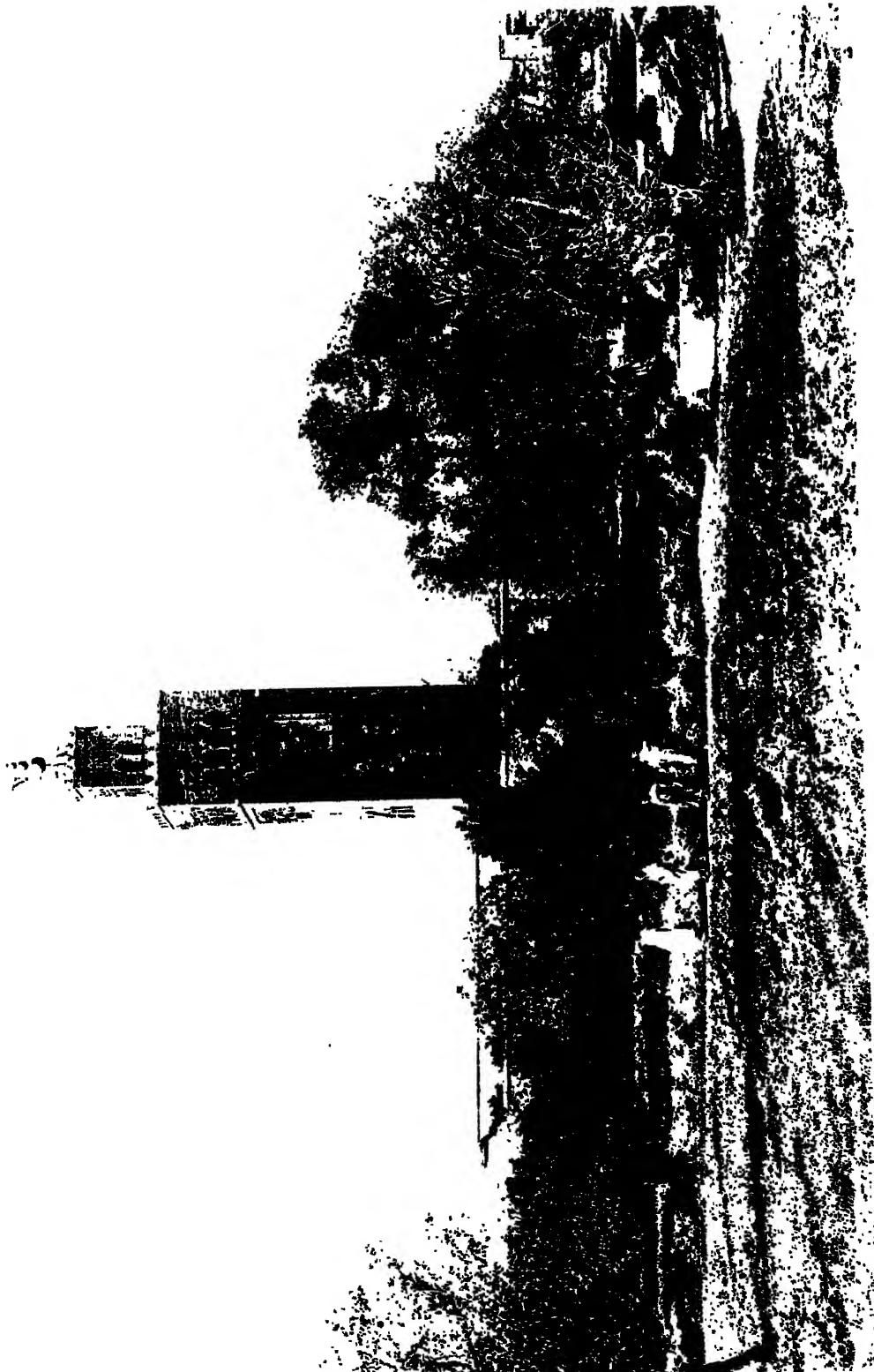
A few years before the Norman Conquest, in 1059 to be exact, the Saharan tribe of Almoravids crossed the Atlas and occupied the city of Aghmat, whose traces may still be seen at a short distance from Marrakesh. Fortune smiled upon the venture, but with growing power came the desire for a new capital, coupled with that inevitable hatred of the work of their predecessors to which I have already referred in another chapter. Thus it came about that Youssef Ben Tachfine founded Marrakesh in 1062. The prosperity of the city quickly increased, reaching its climax towards the end of the twelfth century, under the Almohade Sultans, when Abou Youssef Yakoub El Mansour ordered the construction of the Koutoubia mosque with its famous tower, certainly the finest existing specimen of the Moorish minaret.

The reason why the slender minarets of the East failed to penetrate Western Islam is not clear. Climate and the form of European buildings must certainly have influenced the designs of Moorish architects in Spain, and consequently in Morocco, against the lighter and newer form, though that explanation could hardly

apply to Tunisia, where the square minaret already predominates. Possibly the idea may have come from the interior of Africa, where square, tower-like *kasbahs* were common. Detractors of the form complain that it has an architectural monotony which places it after the masterpieces of Cairo and Constantinople, but on the other hand, its large surfaces are capable of receiving very effective decoration, and the favourite raised trellis-work pattern of coloured tiles has the effect of adding to its height. In the older minarets these coloured tiles were seldom employed, ornate windows and galleries, surrounded by scroll-work carved in the stone, taking their place ; but the true secret of beauty lay in a gradual narrowing of the edifice from base to summit, which gave an appearance of lightness and elegance in spite of very massive construction. The Koutoubia dominates Marrakesh. Knowing no rival, its power is unique. The mosque may have the same arcaded aisles, the same courtyard, and the same grey-green roofs as its brethren throughout the land, but there is a certain kindness about the tower, as if the winds of the desert had softened its lines with their caresses, and begged religion to be tolerant in the city of pleasure. So the cries of the snake-charmers and the beating of drums mingle with the rhythmic stamp of the dancers' feet, and rise about the Koutoubia in the evening air, while the *mueddin* leans for a moment from his high balcony, listening to the call of the world below ere he chants the call to prayer.

Of the three identical towers built by Youssef Yakoub El Mansour only the Koutoubia remains to-day in its original perfection. The tower of Hassan at Rabat was never finished. As for the splendid minaret of the great mosque of Seville, now the Giralda of the Cathedral, one can only plead for extenuating circumstances in any judgment passed upon it as a Moorish monument. Additions and restorations have completely changed its character, and make comparison impossible.

MARRAKESH : THE KOUTOUBIA



I used to gaze up at the Koutoubia and wish that I could join the priest and share with him the view over city and plain to the mountains that, chameleon-like, change their colour every hour of the day. Away beyond gardens and walls, the green-roofed sanctuary of Sidi Bel Abbas, Patron Saint of Marrakesh, rises from the verdure. They say that a colony of blind men lives round the shrine, a strange band of faithful who feel the sanctity they cannot see, and wait for the Saint to recompense their faith. It may be so, but there were blind men enough in the town, and I did not seek them further.

A palace lives second in my memories of Marrakesh. How many palaces have I already attempted to describe ? They seem legion. Not being an imperial residence, the Bahia has no green roofs peeping from behind high, battlemented walls. It is not even old, having been built but twenty-five years ago for Ba Achmed, Prime Minister of the Sultan Abd El Aziz, and in its essentially modern atmosphere one would hardly expect to find the romantic, far less any lasting impression of art. Yet for me the Bahia held both of these things. I often wonder what Eastern spell keeps me from tiring of places that are often so much alike ; what it is that gives charm to each marble fountain, enchantment to each garden of cypresses and palms. The spell must be very potent, for it lasts till a new paradise ousts the old one. In the Bahia there are marble courts and gardens galore, with deep arcades hiding shadowy rooms, contrasts in light and darkness, toned and mellowed by the magic of the South. The master of such a palace must surely have been a great artist ; and one pictures the famous Vizir, dignified and somewhat weary, seeking respite among poets and philosophers from the cares of State. But Ba Achmed is the greatest surprise of the Bahia. Son of a negro and a Jewess, a rare union, even in Morocco, he was fat and astonishingly ugly, but had inherited from his mother intelligence and

cunning, and a certain artistic strain of which the Bahia is the outcome.

Strange details were told me concerning this extraordinary man, who ruled the young Sultan Abd El Aziz with a rod of iron, keeping the whole government in his own hands. When the palace was only partly finished he insisted upon living in it, eating and sleeping and transacting business in one room, while workmen mingled with Ministers of State, and plaster showered upon Caïds and Governors. Never was so difficult a master as Ba Achmed. He was old, and his health was failing. He must have felt that time was short if he would see the Bahia completed. Every order—and some were passing strange—was scrupulously carried out, but nothing satisfied him, and the game of setting up and pulling down and adding and changing went on till one day he himself ended it by dying.

There is an Oriental touch, worthy of the *Arabian Nights*, about the death of Ba Achmed. Up to the last days of the Vizir's illness the workmen had continued their task of beautifying the courtyards and high-ceilinged rooms. Masons chipped ; carpenters sawed ; mosaic workers filled the air with their tapping ; and because the work of painters and gilders and plaster-cutters was silent work, they sang in the heat-scented afternoons the songs that make the colours blend and the gold glitter and the arabesques throw out a thousand branches. Ba Achmed's doctors thought themselves very wise, and ordered all noise to cease while he slept. But the dying man awoke, furious at the sudden silence around him. "They think I am already dead," he cried. "Let them work, I say, till this palace resembles Paradise." So the masons chipped once more, and the carpenters took up their saws, and every workman worked and sang, till amid the din he loved so well Ba Achmed passed away.

For years the Bahia remained closed. Death had made a gap in



THE SAADIAN TOMBS

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its existence. Now it lives again as the French Residency, and in its renaissance one scene among all others would have made the joy of its creator. On a certain evening in January 1914 it became a true palace of the *Arabian Nights*, with courts and gardens fantastically illuminated by a thousand lanterns placed on the ground in Moroccan fashion. Their beams of red and purple made great pools of colour on the white marble, and flashed on the ebony faces of the soldiers standing motionless in the angles of the galleries. In this fairyland Marshal (then General) Lyautey received the great *Caïds* of Southern Morocco in solemn audience, and it would be hard to imagine a finer setting for the display of native splendour by the chiefs, and of Western strength as represented by the famous Marshal of France.* Who could have foretold in January 1914 the cataclysm that was to burst upon the world seven months later? Perhaps all unwittingly the beauty of the Bahia played its part in the Great War, and Ba Achmed may have saved his country when he cried, "Let them work!"

A tomb follows the palace. It is the most impressive memory of all, for besides being a matchless work of art, it brought home to me the fact that, however great our knowledge of Moorish civilisation in Europe may be, we are very ignorant of that same civilisation in Morocco. The country is gradually losing its 'savage' reputation, but few are the casual visitors who realise that it possesses a complicated history of changing dynasties, lean years and times of plenty, plots and counter-plots, comedies and tragedies; and that great kings have reigned over it, whose story may even now be traced in the monuments they built. At the time of my first journey to Morocco I was as ignorant as most, and knew none of these things. Even now my ignorance has not been totally dispelled, but a very

* The visit to Marrakesh of General Lyautey, in January 1914, did much to assure for France the loyalty, during the war, of the great southern *Caïds*.

slight acquaintance with the country soon made apparent one important fact, namely, that, from the earliest Carthaginian and Roman times down to the present Sultans, Morocco has known many masters.

Some came from afar, such as the Omeiad dynasty, whose source of power and mandate was Damascus. Others, such as the Berber and Touareg rulers, refused homage to any overlord, and their revolt was in reality as much against Islam as against their Arab masters. All had their day of power, and the tangled branches of the Moroccan tree of history spread downwards to the Alaouit sultan of the present day, His Imperial Majesty Mouley Youssef, whose ancestors mounted the throne in 1650, that is to say, just a year after the death of Charles I, and whose predecessors were known as the Saadians.

History proves that whenever new dynasties rose to power, whether by popular will or by the grace of tutelary deities, they strove by every means in their power to obliterate all record of those who preceded them.

Born of fear and kept alive by hatred, their action embodied a sense of self-preservation which was at first a dire necessity, but which in course of time lost much of its brutality, while perhaps increasing its moral sting. The process was not confined to any particular country or race. On the barren platform of Persepolis each fallen column tells its tale of vengeance, even as the defaced cartouches to be found on various Egyptian monuments bear witness to the fears of many a Pharaoh. Nor are examples wanting of the later method. Louis XVIII of France, on his return from exile after the downfall of Napoleon, ordered all mention of Austerlitz and Wagram to be removed from the official history books, and dated his correspondence 'in the twenty-second year of Our Reign.' It is not therefore surprising that in Morocco the Alaouit dynasty,

following the Saadians, lost no opportunity of removing the visible traces of their immediate predecessors.

To this end they possessed means more far-reaching than any at the French king's disposal. For whereas Louis, after the signature of the treaty of Paris, would have caused a serious outburst of public protest had he attempted to destroy one of the imperial residences, the Alaouit Sultan, as we shall see, was faced with no such difficulties. An Opposition Press was unknown in Morocco, and he could act accordingly.

At Marrakesh the Saadians possessed a palace, a marvel of strength and beauty worthy of their emperors. Beside it they had built themselves tombs, whose splendour should bear witness for all time to their earthly glory. There came a day when both palace and tombs disappeared. Of the house of the living only a few vague foundations remained, soon to be hidden by the sand. As for the resting-place of the dead, though religious scruples opposed its actual destruction, they could not prevent it from being so built round that its existence was soon forgotten, and the curtain descended on the Saadian dynasty.

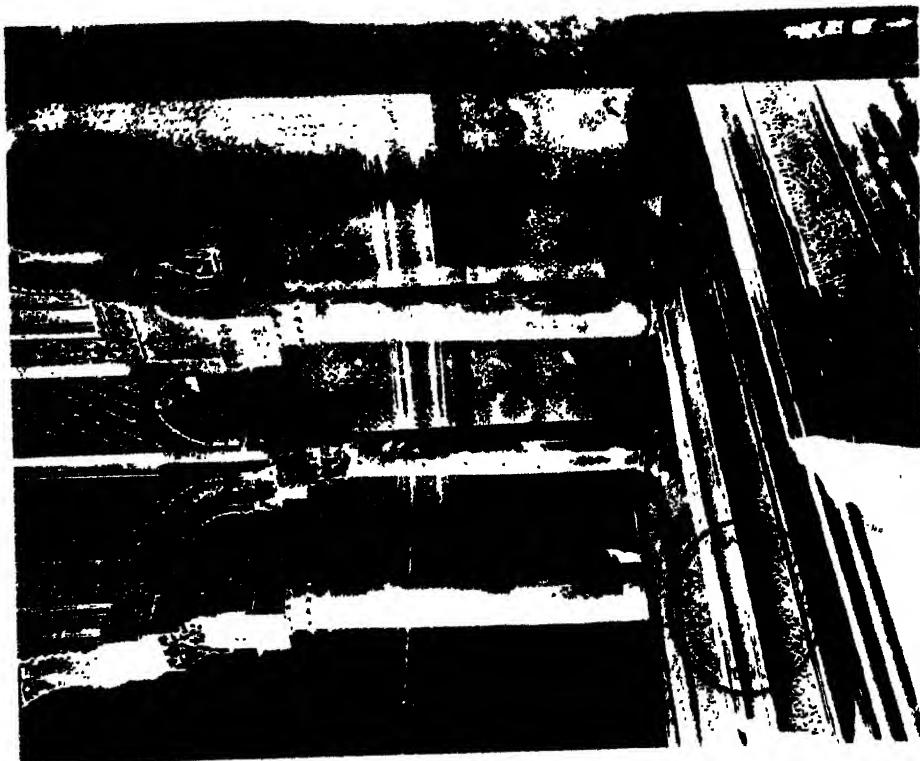
Though the extermination had been too complete for any hope of a return to power, a few members of the ex-royal clan still remained. Being *shereef*, or descendants of the Prophet, they enjoyed a certain reputation of sanctity, and their great poverty rendered them powerless and resigned to their fate. They were therefore spared—and forgotten. Thus it came about that a faithful remnant of the fallen great continued to visit the tombs of their fathers. Through the mosque that had been built before its only entrance they passed stealthily to the tiny piece of ground that still was theirs, to dig their modest graves near the imperial sepulchres. And every Friday a few Saadian women came to weep beside the broken columns.

On a certain evening I was the guest of a great *Caid* of Southern Morocco, one of those *grands seigneurs* who still combine the feudal power of a baron of King John with the delicate taste and artistic ambition of Cosimo di Medici or Stanislas of Poland. It was an evil hour for the reigning house of Morocco. Sultans, too closely related for safety, had succeeded each other on the throne of Fez, and among the great vassals of the South there were some perhaps who remembered that the Alaouits had not always reigned, and that a day might come when they too would disappear. Be that as it may, on the evening in question my host seemed strangely anxious to discuss the former rulers of his land, those vanished sultans who had so often sprung from the ranks of their powerful subjects. I would have sought the safer ground of art and literature, but he always brought me back to the subject that was so clearly near his heart.

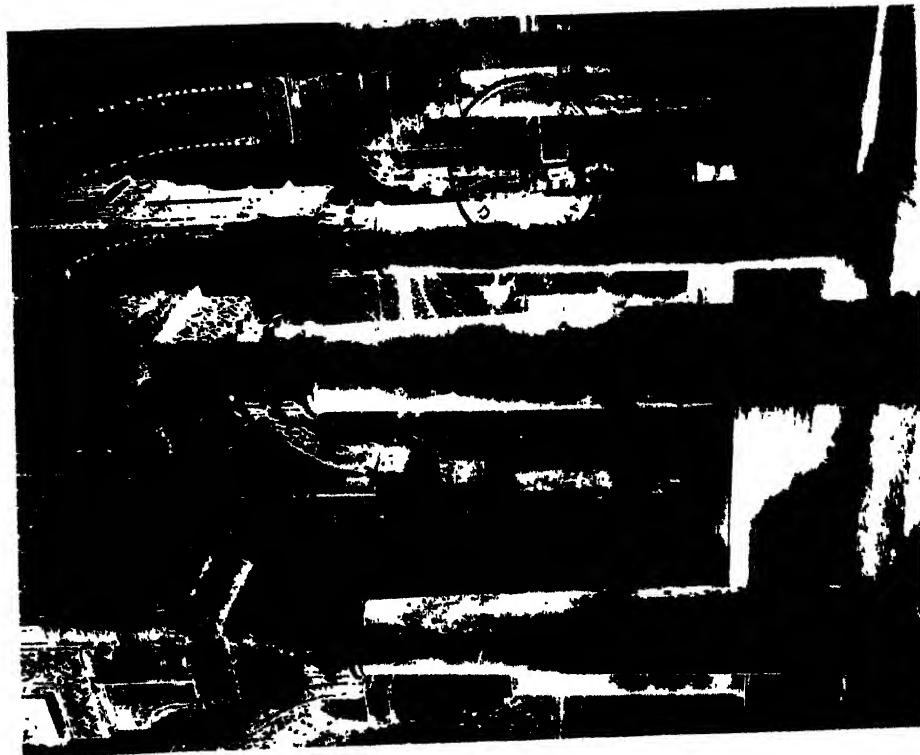
“There was also,” he insisted, “a line of Saadian emperors——” And when I remained silent : “For you who love what is beautiful, and who know the respect and reverence due to our Faith, I could reveal the splendours of a glory that is gone. Time has spared them, but now, without help, they must surely fall to ruin.” There was a long pause, and then, as if debating the gravity of the offer, he added, “Will you look upon them, O my friend ?”

He rose, and I followed him into the darkness of the night, to see what are now well known in all Morocco as the Saadian tombs.

At that time the only entrance was by a narrow doorway leading from the adjoining mosque, and therefore for a Christian its passage was an undertaking of no small difficulty. Fortunately for me, my guide was a very great Moroccan chief indeed, one of the few for whom even religious laws may sometimes be modified, and with him I was able to enter the mosque unobserved and pass through the doorway that led into the unknown. After a series of narrow



THE SAADDIAN TOMBES



passages, so dark that one lost all sense of distance and direction, we emerged in an enclosure, open to the sky and overgrown with nettles and weeds, through which peeped out the white marble of tombstones. Beyond, two *koubbas* or chapels rose pale and ghostlike in the darkness, and it was there, beneath these roofs that seemed so strangely Florentine, that the last resting-place of a vanished dynasty was revealed to me.

At first the sober splendour of this tomb, certainly the most magnificent in Morocco, struck me dumb with admiration. Later, one could realise the mass of detail that gradually appeared like the image of a photographic plate—the perfection of the domes ; the wondrous cedarwood ceilings with their deep honeycombed carving, all gilt like the cover of some ancient Koran ; the colouring of the mosaic ; and, above all, the grace of the twelve marble columns whose bases the pious kisses of the faithful had polished. But in that first moment it was only the faultless majesty of the whole that touched my senses. As I stood half-stunned by the suddenness of this revelation of beauty, the *Caid* came forward, and taking my hand, led me among the tombstones to the farther end of the weed-covered space, where a high battlemented wall separated it from the outer world.

“ Beyond that wall,” he said, “ stood the Badiya palace of the Saadian emperors. It was destroyed by the Alaouit sultans. Nothing remains.”

Al Badiya ! To anyone who knew the history of the great days of Marrakesh, these words, meaning in Arabic ‘ The Wonderful,’ evoked something fabulous that had been, but now lived only in legend, something of which very old men loved to tell in the cool evening hours, and add at each telling to the list of its marvels. Was it only the dream of Marrakesh ? Had anyone ever really set eyes upon it ? I had noticed the traces of massive foundations somewhere beyond this very wall, of rectangular spaces filled in with earth and

sand which seemed to show that once some great building had stood there ; and by some strange chance a single giant palm still lived where all other life had disappeared, waving its tattered leaves as if in mourning for the hidden ruins. Was this the site of that Saadian palace, that maze of courts and fountains, with its countless columns and its rooms that equalled in number the days of the solar year ?

I looked at the *Caid* and he, divining my thoughts, inclined his head in dignified assent. Then I remembered having seen in many parts of the country, but especially at Mequinez, columns of Italian marble and classic form, whose origin had greatly puzzled me, and I understood at last that in this very waste-land lay the answer to the riddle.

Not even the quarries of Carrara had been too distant for the Master of Marrakesh. At his command they had added their snow-white marble to the glories of an imperial Court. Distance had meant nothing, labour had been of no account. Even Italy had paid the tribute of her art. At once the name of the man who had done these things flashed through my mind, towering above all others of his race like the cypress above the fruit trees of the orchard ; Abou Achmed El Mansour the Saadian, known to history as ' *Ed Debbi*' or 'the Golden,' lord of all Morocco, conqueror of Touat and Gourara, whose armies had marched victorious through the Sahara and entered Timbuktu, carrying the frontiers of his empire to the Niger, and to whose will even the turbulent population of Fez had at last surrendered. He it was who had come in triumph to Marrakesh to build the Badiya palace.

If one can believe the historian El Oufrani,* it was ' the most splendid edifice existing in any Moslem country, surpassing in

* *Histoire de la dynastie Saadienne au Maroc de 1511 à 1670*, par El Oufrani, traduite par Fagnau. (Paris, 1889.)

beauty the marvels of Cordova,' well worthy of the flattering verses inscribed on its principal pavilion, the *Khamsiniya** whose stately columns rose to a height of no less than fifty feet from the ground. 'In this monument,' ran the inscription, 'the signs of beauty are truly manifest, and exercise their fascination even as the pupil of a beautiful eye ; and within this realm of beauty lives the guide of all peoples of the earth, be they far or near.' How easily the half-forgotten legends, stored away in the dustiest corners of my memory, seemed to awake and rebuild the dwelling of that 'Golden' emperor, the monument to his power that was to have been eternal. In the flickering light of the lanterns held by the *Caid's* black slaves, the vanished palace seemed to grow out of the darkness, and take its place beside the tombs that had outlived it. Once more the great *koubbas* and pavilions reared their high roofs against the violet sky, filling the mysterious African night with the glitter of gilded ceilings and the pale gleam of marble columns, tall and graceful like those of the tombs around me, and like them, ranged in groups of three. Between the pavilions, each of which was almost a palace in itself, stretched long white pergolas, their arches mirrored in the water ; and across the marble-rimmed pools ran raised pathways of mosaic, making the buildings above them seem like a resplendent mirage hovering between earth and sky.

We are told that when the Badiya was finished in every detail, El Mansour prepared a feast of great splendour to which all the great chiefs of the country were invited. Dishes of rare delicacy and endless variety were served, and every guest received a rich present. Never had such magnificence been known. Now, among the crowd was a certain half-witted shepherd whose mental deficiency had gained him a reputation of holiness. "Tell me, O my friend," asked El Mansour jokingly, "what thinkest thou of this great palace ? "

* *Khamsin*, in Arabic, fifty.

“I think,” replied the shepherd, “that when it is destroyed it will form a great rubbish heap.” Thus did the Saadian emperor learn the strange destiny that was to blot out for ever his palace and his race, with all their splendour and power. The palace did indeed survive the dynasty, but not for long. Mouley Ismaïl, the most powerful sovereign of the succeeding Alaouits, hated its strength and its beauty, and saw in its vast proportions the eternal reminder of a reign as great as, if not greater than, his. Its creator was gone, but his work remained ; menacing, reproachful, insistent. Not that Mouley Ismail had failed to show himself a great builder. At his command the Cyclopean palaces and *kasbahs* of Mequinez had risen out of the earth. He had created lakes and terraces and gardens that even Louis XIV might have envied, and which actually came to be known as the ‘Versailles of Morocco.’ But perhaps he felt that, in spite of all these things, no work of his could hope for the perfection achieved by El Mansour, and that the fame of Marrakesh would outlive that of Mequinez. The fact remains that, in the year 1119 of the Hegira (A.D. 1710), Mouley Ismaïl ordered the complete and utter destruction of the Badiya palace.

The order was carried out to the letter, each building being systematically destroyed until not one stone was left standing upon another. Inestimable treasures of art were mutilated and dispersed, and when all was finished there remained only great mounds, uncultivated and forlorn, a meeting-place of jackals, a haunt of grey owls that fly before the moon—the ‘rubbish heap’ of the prophecy.

Long before the vengeance of Mouley Ismail, the seed of destruction had been sown within the Badiya’s halls and courtyards. Its beauty was too brilliant to be lasting, too wonderful to be aught but fragile, and with the death of El Mansour, the ‘Light of the Moslem World,’ whose splendours surpassed even those of Damascus, had already begun to flicker and grow feeble.

The scene is set and the last act of the drama begins. In the gathering darkness the palace stands, gaunt and tragic, a dying flame round which a few faithful clans still rally, while El Mansour's immediate successor strives to defend his tottering throne against the attacks of his brothers. Behind the high, rose-coloured walls terror reigns supreme. Treason and murder stalk hand in hand through the gardens and beneath the colonnades, till one day dark stains appear on the floor of an inner chamber. Abd El Malek is assassinated, and then El Oualid, and Achmed El Abbas, last Sultan of his race. The fountains of the Badiya run with the blood of its rulers, and with the last red drops in the marble basins their trickle ceases for ever. It is the end of the Saadian dynasty.

Although the fall of the Saadians was in itself an event of purely Moroccan interest, the tragedies accompanying it bear a striking similarity to certain episodes in contemporary European history, and are therefore of wider interest than would at first sight appear. Not alone in Marrakesh did murder and treason claim their victims among the great. The Badiya was but one of the many stages upon which, almost at the same hour, the great drama of the Renaissance was being acted in tumult and in triumph. From Italy its fame had spread through Europe, where its actors had appealed, not alone to princely patrons of the Arts, but to the people, rousing them from the slumber of mediævalism to the reality of a revival in which they too had a part to play. No barrier could stay its progress, and with the last Moslems to be driven from Spain by its Christian kings, the turmoil of revolution and romance flowed into Africa, carrying with it what was no longer a thirst for refinement and elegance, but a violence of action and thought, eager for fresh conquests. As in France the House of Valois had perished in the ruins of the old order, with Charles IX a fleeting shadow in the glow of massacre, and Henri III falling beneath an assassin's dagger, both victims of

that Renaissance which had made their mother an orphan and then brought her to France ; and as in England the scaffolds of Fotheringay and Whitehall had marked, each in its turn, the downfall of a luckless race ; so, with the destruction of the Badiya palace, did a Moroccan dynasty and its emperors vanish for ever beneath the sands of the desert.

The Badiya was completed in 1594 and destroyed in 1711. It existed for exactly one hundred and seventeen years, and by a curious coincidence one hundred and seventeen is the total numerical value of the Arabic letters composing its name.* The Arab saying that 'Life, Eternity, and Power belong to God alone' may well stand as its epitaph.

* Al Bad(iy)a, 'The Wonderful.' Numerical values : A = 1, L = 30, B = 2, D = 4, (IY) or Y = 10, the guttural terminal "ain" (which I am obliged to give as an A sound) = 70—total = 117.

CHAPTER X

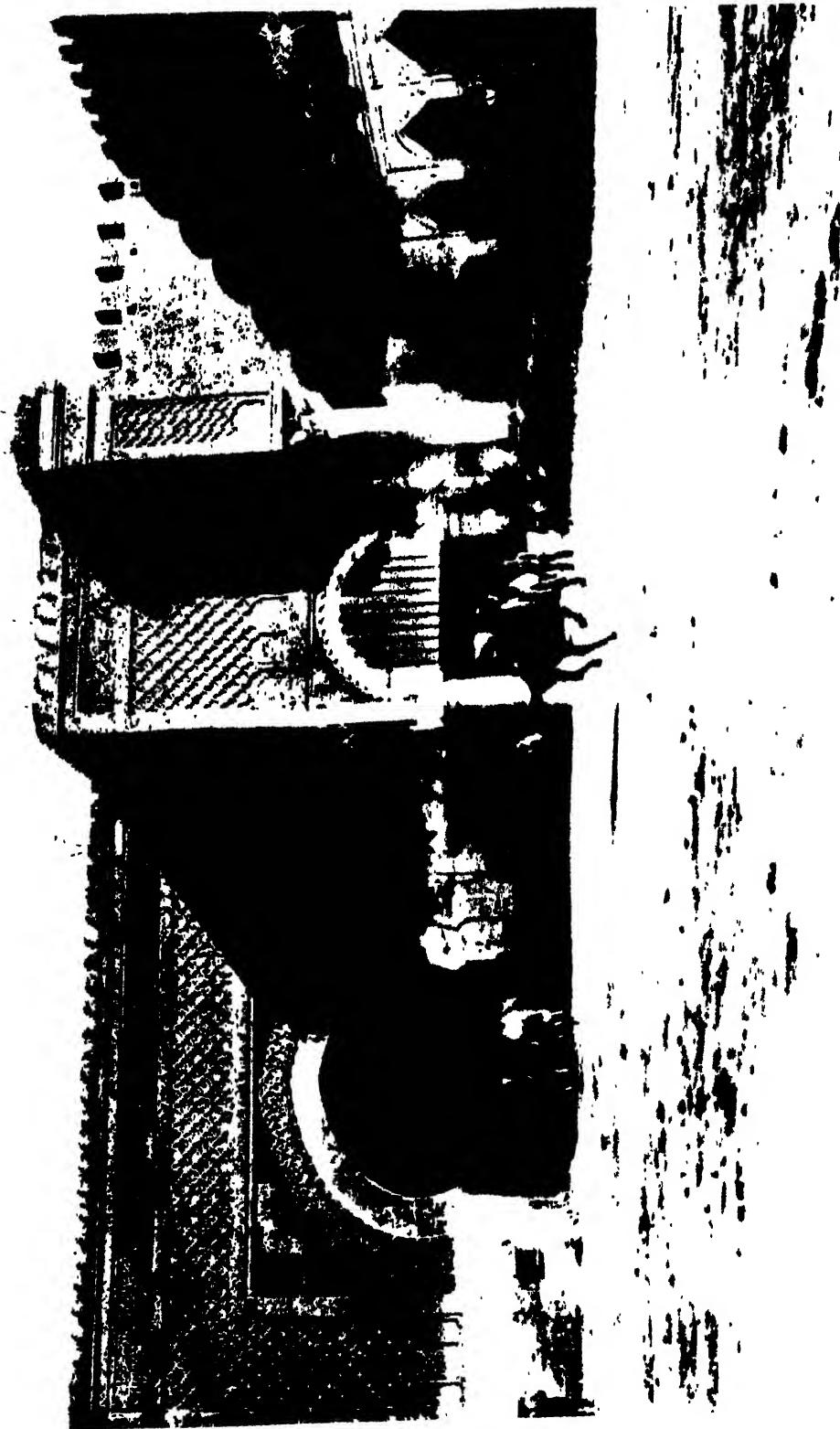
MEQUINEZ

AN impression of ruin ; of colour too, and beauty, and movement ; but above all and over all of ruin, endless and overwhelming, forcing one to wonder and question and wonder again, unsatisfied. In Mequinez the past submerges the present, and though the town of to-day is decidedly picturesque, each bastion is but a reminder of vanished glories, each gateway a page of history. Nor is its interest localised in the remnant of one particular palace or fortress. The country for miles outside is a ruin, the vast enclosed spaces merging so gradually in the untouched land that one cannot tell their beginning or their ending.

From a distance, Mequinez has the appearance of a city of palaces, resting upon deep foundations of reddish brown, with tall, square minarets toned to their surroundings by the lattice-work of coloured tiles that covers them. As one approaches, the mirage fades, and it is only the warm colour of the walls and gateways, with their superb designs in mosaic of softest blues and greens, that gives charm and majesty to what are but ruins crumbling in the sun. The town stands on the ridge of a small hill, along whose northern flank a modest stream flows through gardens and orchards dotted with pavilions and white, cube-like houses. On the north are the barracks and other buildings of a great modern camp. To the south stretches

the undulating plain, infinitely vast, infinitely sad, that holds the vanished glory of Mequinez.

One of those tiny houses in the gardens sheltered me for a few of the many days I passed in Morocco. It was a retreat well hidden among fig-trees and poplars. In front, a small open space seemed to invite the *alfresco* evening meal and its accompaniment of tea-making, at which, since my experience at Mouley Idris, I had become an expert. The stream ran close behind the house, in a deep and narrow bed, gathering force and swiftness for the mill-wheel that creaked and groaned a little farther down the valley. Beyond the stream the ramparts, with their waving robe of many-coloured wild flowers, rose to the jumbled terraces of the town ; but to go there one had to make a long detour through gardens and waste land, crossing the stream by a low, stone bridge, and passing up the hill to the labyrinth of red bastions and empty spaces that is Mequinez. After the tortuous lanes of Fez the streets seemed broad and straight, and the mosques with their immense minarets stood majestic and lonely against the endless walls that face them on every side. Oh, these walls of Mequinez ! One must distort a famous phrase, and say '*les murs derrière lesquels il s'est passée quelquechose*,' in order adequately to describe their sinister perspective. What did happen behind them ? What lies on their farther side ? At the top of the hill the way broadens into a vast deserted esplanade. On the right the town slopes downwards towards the valley. On the left the sheer, blank wall, fifty feet high at least, stretches away in the distance. But it is not really blank. Hidden behind an out-jutting bastion of the *kasbah*, and invisible till one is within a stone's throw of it, is a gateway so gigantic and so imposing that one stands amazed. Between two great marble columns its arch looms black against the sunlight, like a mouth of Hades waiting to engulf the unwary, or a fantastic jewel enshrined in a frame of glittering mosaic.



MIQUINIZ : BAR MANSOUR EL. ALEUI

It is Bab Mansour El Aleuj, the most beautiful of the nine gates which once led to the imperial fortress and palace. Mansour was a renegade Christian, but whether he built the gate, or why it should be named after him, I do not know. Besides its visible splendour Bab Mansour has a strange and invisible power. Only at a certain point can the light of day be seen on the other side of its double-angled vault, and if one looks long enough from the magic spot, not only do the grass-grown courtyards and crumbling towers of the *kasbah* rise from the surrounding darkness, but also a clear though distant vista of time, a vision of history, like some old miniature in a black frame—the secret behind the walls.

The word Mequinez is the Spanish form of the Arabic Miknasa, the name of the Berber tribe which inhabited the region in the early days of Morocco. The geographer Edrissi, writing in A.D. 1100, calls the place Takarart, an ordinary citadel from which a village had gradually developed. From that time its importance steadily increased, and the next record gives the foundation of the palace in 1634, towards the end of the Saadian dynasty. Sultans then began to use it as a residence, but the greatest days of Mequinez were still to come, and it was left to Mouley Ismaïl to make it his capital and to crown its glories with the brilliance of his reign and the vastness of his constructions. We have already made the acquaintance of this Sultan in the preceding chapter, a fleeting acquaintance, where he appears more as the vengeful successor to a luckless race than the great ruler of a country at the zenith of its power. It is, perhaps, an unjust picture, for after all, the destruction of the Badiya palace was merely an episode typical of the times, and necessary from Mouley Ismaïl's point of view. Third Sultan of the Alaouit dynasty, which still rules Morocco, he mounted the throne in 1672, and died in 1727 after a reign of fifty-five years, in itself something of an achievement, considering the dangers against which he had to contend. At

the outset the chief trouble came, in a manner typical of most royal families of the time, from his own relatives, in this case a brother and a nephew, who revolted against his power. In addition, a certain Spanish Moor named Ghilan had overrun a great part of Northern Morocco at the head of a strong band of Turks, and it was only after crushing these rebels that the Sultan could turn his attention to the affairs of his country. Mouley Ismaïl had a great dislike of Fez, whose inhabitants were famous for their turbulence. It was in Fez that Ghilan had been finally surrounded and killed, and in consequence a heavy fine had been imposed upon the town. So the hatred was mutual, and the fact that during his long reign not a single monument was constructed at Fez in his name is eloquent of the Sultan's attitude towards the city.* Of Marrakesh with its Badiya and its memories of Saadian grandeur there could be no question as a place of imperial residence, while at Rabat on the Atlantic coast the risk of foreign attack was too great. No other town of importance existed, and therefore, for a time, Mequinez became the capital of Morocco.

Little can the builders of the first palace and citadel have dreamed of the colossal additions, the courtyards and gardens and lakes, surrounded by endless walls and monumental gateways, that were to become famous as the 'Versailles of Morocco.' Besides the description of native contemporary writers, an English traveller, John Windus, in his *Journey to Mequinez*, published in 1721, gives an interesting account of the palace, a few years before the death of Mouley Ismaïl. According to him, it was 'about four miles in circumference, the whole building exceeding massy and the walls in every part very thick, the outer one about a mile long and twenty-five feet thick. The interior is composed of oblong

* A few years before his death he enlarged the *Zaouia* of Mouley Idris at Fez, but this cannot be counted as a new construction.

courtyards surrounded by buildings and arcades. These buildings are more or less square, with pyramidal roofs ornamented with green glazed tiles outside, and inside with richly carved and painted wood-work.' Of all these things much remains to-day. The walls are still there, secure in their twenty-five feet of thickness for many centuries to come. The pyramidal roofs, with their green glazed tiles, still cover great buildings in the weed-grown courtyards, and to both walls and roofs time has added a wealth of flowers, white and yellow anemones, with here and there bunches of pink poppies, that seem to spring from every crevice, and hang like garlands from the battlements. Such is the old Dar El Makhzen of Mequinez, half palace, half fortress, a city within a city. What of its imperial master ? Mouley Ismail is certainly a great figure in Moroccan history, and his life forms one of its brilliant pages. In the Alaouit dynasty he holds a place, if one may judge by the work he accomplished, no less important than that of El Mansour among the Saadians. Feared and hated in the early part of his long reign, he ended it, unlike his contemporary Louis XIV, in an apotheosis of popularity, caused principally by his success in driving the foreigners from the various coast towns they had occupied. The evacuation of Tangier by the English was a special cause of joy to the Moslems. It was considered as Mouley Ismail's greatest victory, in which the imperial forces were represented as having driven us to our ships, an entirely fictitious story that served its purpose none the less. Probably few people are aware that for twenty-two years Tangier was a British possession. It was an interesting episode. Previous to 1662 the port had belonged successively to Spain and to Portugal, but on the marriage of Catherine of Braganza to Charles II, it came to England as part of her dowry, which, by the way, also included Bombay. During the following years the fort and mole were completed, and many other works undertaken. A garrison—the 2nd Queen's Royal

Regiment*—was sent there and remained till 1684, when parliament decided to abandon the city and port to the Moors. Now, in most books of reference the abandonment of Tangier is stated to have been due to the great expense it involved, but as a matter of fact, money was only a secondary reason for the action of the House of Commons. The place had always been a source of trouble. To begin with, its appearance in Queen Catherine's dowry is explained by the fact that the Portuguese were heartily tired of its cost, especially as they had very few ships passing through the Straits of Gibraltar. Therefore it came to England, and during twenty-two years considerable sums were laid out upon its upkeep. In the end, Parliament certainly refused to sanction further supplies, but for the reason that the money voted was not used in the manner intended. In 1729 Captain Braithwaite writes from Tangier that 'What made the Parliament at last tired of it was because the money they gave was frequently misapplied. I do not believe the English would ever have parted with that place in any but in such another Reign as was that of King Charles II, after such a vast expense upon it.'

What then had King Charles II been doing? I have before me the address of the House of Commons to His Majesty, in answer to His Majesty's message relating to Tangier, presented upon Monday, 29th November, 1680, a document which gives a pretty clear answer to the question. The King's message says, 'His Majesty did desire the Advice and Assistance of His Parliament, in relation to Tangier. The condition and Importance of the Place obliges His Majesty to put this House in mind again that he relies upon them for the support of it, without which it cannot be much longer Preserved.'

The reply is direct and to the point. 'The Commons in

* *The History of the Second Queen's Royal Regiment*, vol. i. By J. Davis, London, 1887.

Parliament assembled, having taken into consideration Your Majesties late Message relating to Tangier, cannot but account the present condition of it, as your Majesty is pleased to represent it in Your said Message (after so vast a Treasure expended to make it useful), not only as one Infelicity more added to the afflicted Estate of your Majesties faithful and Loyal Subjects, but as one result also of the same Councils and Designs which have brought your Majesties Person, Crown, and Kingdoms into those great and imminent Dangers, with which at this day they are surrounded ; and we are the less surprised to hear of the Exigencies of Tangier, when we remember that since it became part of Your Majesties Dominions, it hath several times been under the command of Popish Governors (particularly for some time under the Command of a Lord Impeached, and now a Prisoner in the Tower for the Execrable and Horrid Popish Plot),* that the Supplies sent thither have been in great part made up of Popish Officers and Soldiers, and that the Irish Papists amongst the Soldiers of that Garrison have been the Persons most Countenanced and Encouraged.'

So the Popish plot was at the bottom of the matter. The last paragraph of the address seems determined to leave no doubt in the King's mind as to the attitude of his faithful Commons, ' that while we shall give a supply to Tangier, we may be assured we do not augment the strength of our Popish Adversaries, nor increase our own Dangers.' Of course this passage at arms took place three years before the actual evacuation, but it is none the less significant for that. One thing we need not regret. Mouley Ismail remained ignorant of the true reason of our departure. Had he known that religious differences among the infidels had caused his most cherished seaport to be abandoned by them, the victory of Islam would have been magnified a thousandfold in his estimation.

* Lord Shaftesbury.

As my ship passed out towards the last red glimmer beyond Cap Spartel, leaving Tangier behind in the purple haze of night, I had often thought of these things, and wondered, if there had been no Popish plot, and if Mouley Ismaïl had never driven us to our ships—IF in capital letters, as Lord Dunsany would put it—what would Tangier have been like to-day. That question no man may answer, and we must be content with Tangier as it is, a crowning paradox in the land of paradox. What other word can describe a place where two ex-Sultans live on terms of friendship, where people were (no longer are, alas !) kidnapped one day and ransomed the next, where a man goes to sleep a brigand and wakes up Pacha of the city, and where even diplomats may remain in peace, provided they never agree on any question ? Such things sound like tales from *Arabian Nights*, but until quite lately they were the daily bread of Tangier. For the moment the place is very much in the public eye. Its proximity to the seat of war in Spanish Morocco is the cause of much anxiety to the European powers concerned. Complications of the most undesirable nature may arise, as they have arisen so often in the past, at the very moment when the future looks its rosiest. In that respect I have little hope of Tangier. It is too habitual an offender ever to be reformed. There is an evil spirit in it, and the shade of the old Sultan at Mequinez may still laugh last in the matter.

Mouley Ismaïl died on the 22nd March, 1727, at the age of eighty. One can imagine the wave of fear, of exultation, and perhaps—who knows—of sorrow, that spread like wild-fire through the vast palace when the news became known. According to popular belief, the Sultan possessed a *hareem* rivalling that of Solomon, and had 528 sons and an equal number of daughters. What wailing must have risen from the tribe of mothers ! What beating of breasts and throwing of dust upon dishevelled heads ! What symphony of woe from the mouths of the thousand and fifty-six imperial offspring !

If there were any real sorrow, it came from these high-walled courtyards, for on the death of the sovereign the fate of the inmates of his *hareem* was often no enviable one. For them the past held everything, the future nothing. Not only would other women supplant them, but the new ruler might choose another residence, leaving them hidden and forgotten behind the abandoned palace walls, fortunate if they did not starve. On the other hand there were many people to whom the death of Mouley Ismaïl must have brought a ray of hope. I mean the thousands of Christian captives, employed upon the immense constructions of every description which he had never ceased to undertake. Of the hard lives of these men the walls and towers of Mequinez are eloquent, especially as Moslem hatred of the infidel was then at its height, and the building mania of an imperial master had to be humoured. It may have been his employment of these captives that gained for Mouley Ismail the reputation of cruelty so often quoted against him, though he was probably no more cruel than any other ruler of his time, either in Africa or in Europe. One is inclined to forget that what reads to-day like sheer barbarity was looked upon in the eighteenth century as a quite normal state of affairs.

The case of the Christian captives was certainly bad, but not nearly so bad as represented, and always better than that of the *renegadoes*, as the Christians who became Mohammedans were called. They were despised and distrusted by the Moors, and were rarely able to earn a living unless they joined the Emperor's army. The captives, on the other hand, possessed a kind of internal government of their own, with certain rights and prerogatives which seem to have been respected. Though the Emperor kept most of them at work on his buildings, the labour was no greater than that of a workman in Europe. Some were actually permitted to keep taverns for their own countrymen, and all received a daily allowance of bread. Masters of

ships were never obliged to work, and apparently a small bribe to the *alcaide*, or governor—who was always a Christian—was sufficient to secure a day off for anyone. The special building, known as the *canute*, that housed the captives, was infinitely better than our common prisons of that time. In it each nation had its distinct apartments, and the governor a specially comfortable one. There was even a market for all kinds of provisions. According to Captain Braithwaite's diary, to which I owe these details, some captives became quite wealthy, keeping their own mules and servants. ' Yet,' he concludes, ' this is called insupportable slavery among the Moors. But we found it, like many other things in the country, strangely misrepresented. No doubt there have been examples of the Emperor's barbarity and cruelty, but often the captives themselves gave occasion for it. I am not willing to entertain the least good opinion of the Moors, but yet what is Truth is Truth.'

It is comforting to find that there has been exaggeration of the hardships of those days. Nobody could accuse the above-mentioned traveller of prejudice in favour of the Moors. In many cases his judgments are merciless, but as he remarks, Truth is Truth, and the truth about Mouley Ismaïl was bad enough to allow of an occasional word in his favour. At the same time, it is significant that in 1729, two years after the Emperor's death, there were only two English captives found at Mequinez.

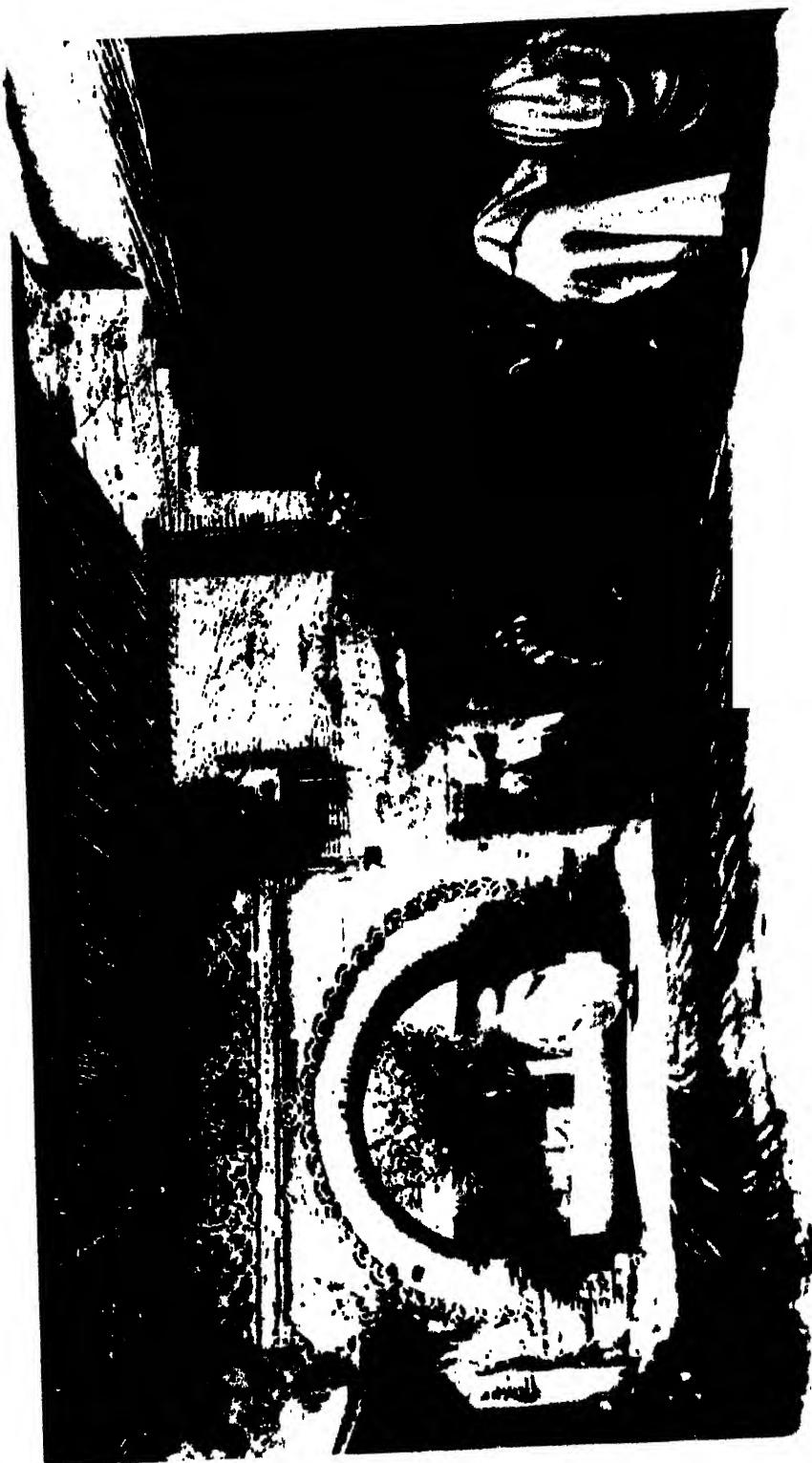
How Mr. Russel, envoy of George II to Achmed Ed Dehbi, Mouley Ismaïl's successor, worked for the release, not only of the British, but also of foreigners, is simply and dramatically told in the same volume. At the time of his visit there remained alive in Mequinez, besides the two Englishmen, four Jews, two Dutchmen with their wives and four children, and two Portuguese. It is impossible here to give an account of the delays, intrigues, and

bribes which accompanied the negotiations, but eventually Mr. Russel succeeded in freeing all except the Dutch. Their case was curious. ' The Emperor demanded a prodigious Ransom for them to satisfy the Jews that had bought them. . . . I do not know a more moving Spectacle than that of the Dutch people. These poor Creatures had depended upon their Liberty ever since we came into the Country, and their Joy was the more increased when they heard that Money had actually been taken for them ; yet in the midst of all these Assurances they were left behind.' What seems incredible is that the Jews should have bought Christians, but such to all intents and purposes was the case. A Jew named Ben Zeki had supplied the Emperor with powder and arms from Cadiz, and in payment had been given power to dispose of the Dutch captives to the number of eighty-six. Accordingly, Ben Zeki had procured credential letters for his brother and another Jew to go to Holland as ambassadors from the Emperor to treat for the ransom of the Dutch, and they hoped to be considerable gainers by this negotiation ! As only eight Dutch, including children, remained in Mequinez on the arrival of Mr. Russel one must conclude that the Brothers Zeki & Co. had indeed been successful in their diplomatic career. Their unwillingness to let the remnant go for nothing is comprehensible, for after all, business was business, even in a question of captives at the Court of Mouley Ismail.

As regards the vast extent of the *kasbah* and palace of Mequinez, one must remember the size of the population they sheltered. Besides the Emperor and his household there were the ministers and their servants, the *hareem*, the eunuchs, the negro guards, the priests, slaves of every description, and hangers-on by hundreds. No wonder that poor Mr. Russel was nearly suffocated in the crowd on his way to an audience. But there was also a humorous touch about that adventure. After bribing the officials at each successive

door and gateway, there came an unaccountably long wait in the royal antechamber. It turned out that a very important personage had been forgotten, namely, ' a great fat mulatto Court Lady of about 50, of great authority, who acted as a sort of Gentlewoman-Usher to his drunken Majesty (the Sultan was hardly ever sober), no one having admittance to him but through her means.' That apparently was the last straw, and one can understand the ambassador when he says that ' neither Treaties, Bribes, Oaths, Promises, or anything else can be depended upon. . . . I cannot tell which are the worst set of People at this Court, whether Jews, Renegades, Christians, Negroes, or Moors ; but I verily think, if there is any Difference, or that one is better than another, it is on the side of the Moors,' an uncomplimentary judgment, but no doubt a true one.

It is hard to tear oneself away from Bab Mansour and the magic of its past, but there is so much to see in Mequinez—the *souks*, the *mellah* and the famous *Aguedal* of Mouley Ismaïl, the existence of which among all these ruins seems more and more improbable. Even the faithful Ibrahim fails to convince me, though he keeps repeating "*Al Aguedal ! Al Aguedal !*" like an incantation, and points along the endless line of walls that John Windus called 'massy and very thick.' After Fez, the *souks* of Mequinez seem small and empty. The sensation of ruin penetrates even to the covered alleys that seek vainly to hide an all-pervading indifference beneath their false air of animation. Nobody seems in the least anxious to sell anything, and the merchants sit in the darkest corners of their cupboard-like shops with the immobility and disdain of surfeited spiders, to whom the inquisitive fly is no longer an attraction. I often wonder what is passing through the mind hidden under such an impassive exterior, during the long hours when there is nothing to break its reverie. Is it the picture of a tiny house, huddled against the towering wall of Mouley Ismaïl, where the merchant's



A STREET IN MCQUINAZ

pearl beyond price awaits her lord's return ? Or the thought that it is better to sleep now, for the 'brightest star in heaven' is old and garrulous, and the night will not be peaceful ? Do the merits of an ancient carpet fill the brain of some Hassan of Mequinez, as he contemplates the pile of worthless goods beneath which it is cunningly hidden ? Moslem brains are as tightly closed to the infidel as the gates of Mohammed's paradise, but I think that most likely it is the picture of a garden that rises like a mirage on the wall of the shop, a simple garden down in the valley, where the merchant will pass the cool evening hours after the shutters have been secured with their heavy bolts and padlocks, a garden of roses and sweet-scented oleanders, with wild geraniums mirrored red in the flowing water, and tall, black cypresses standing like sentinels against the orange sky.

Day dreams of the *souk* ! Alas that the infidel should come to dispel them, and remind the dreamers that they have goods to sell ! Gradually, strange treasures make their furtive appearance—burnous of fine white wool ; worked leather bindings for Korans and other religious books, like those in the street of the bookbinders at Fez, though not so beautiful ; buckles and stirrups, inlaid with silver and gold, that remind one of Damascus ; earthenware incense-burners of intricate design. Farther on is the street of the silversmiths and jewellers, full of quaint and unexpected things—heavy bracelets for wrists and ankles, centuries old perhaps, with their hidden tales of love and jealousy that we shall never know ; chased silver holders for Korans, rubbed and polished by generations of pious hands ; pierced-work buckles to fasten the *hantouz*, or girdle, of the women ; bottles with long, thin necks for sprinkling scent. The same things as in Tunis or Cairo one might say, but one would be wrong. As yet no imitators from Birmingham or Germany have found their way to the squalid half-empty tunnels that are

the *souks* of Mequinez. That will come, but for the moment the work that lies scattered upon the worm-eaten shelves of the silver-smiths is the work of Morocco.

“*Al Aguedal*,” murmurs a voice in my ear. Ibrahim has come to remind me, and I pass on towards the unknown as if in an enchantment. A mosque rears its high walls beside the *souk*, and through its gate there is a glimpse of pillars and arches in mysterious perspective. Another gateway opens on the *mellah*, or Jewish quarter, a world as animated and crowded as the Arab world outside is empty and silent. The men, dressed in skull-caps and long black gowns always too tight for them, carry the air of business typical of their race, and their waxlike faces, framed by straggling ringlets, seem even longer than those of the Jews of Fez. The women go unveiled, and are often handsome, with a healthier colour than the men ; and of children and smells and filth there is no end. Strange places these ghettos of Morocco, always teeming with life and always clinging to the walls of some imperial palace, the home of a people hated and yet protected, a thorn in the side of the rulers that they dare not pluck out.

“*Al Aguedal !*” Above the noise of the *mellah* the call is imperative, the call of those famous gardens that were once the playground of an emperor. The way still follows the interminable walls from which there is no escape, through immense open spaces, past walled-up gateways, flower-grown courtyards, and yet other walls, enclosing buildings whose green-tiled roofs, with their waving crown of weeds and grasses, are just visible above the battlements. Then suddenly, like every climax in this land where time counts not, a gateway, open this time, appears in the wall. Beyond it is a sort of enclosed meadow, and at its farther end a second gateway leads to the strangest ruins of all, the stables of the Sultan Mouley Ismail.

Row upon row of massive arches, thick with wild poppies and anemones, stretch infinitely far in parallel aisles. How far ? I wonder. To calculate distance where everything is colossal seems almost an impertinence. The people of Mequinez say that the length of the building is a quarter of a mile, and even more when their enthusiasm is aroused. Its arches are roofless, and look as if they had never been covered in. Did the Sultan die before they were finished ? Or did his love of building make him leave them for something still more enormous that was never to be realised ? Ibrahim assures me that they could hold a thousand horses, and that the Sultan had a carved and gilded room at one end, where he would come and smoke his pipe and watch his cavalry. Anywhere else the stables of Mouley Ismaïl would rank as a ruin of importance. Here they are but a detail, a piece of the puzzle, an item on the bewildering programme. After the stables I am to see the gardens. Ibrahim announces with decision that the great moment has arrived, but still I doubt him. What gardens can there be among this desolation ? Yet, for the builder of the stables and the *kasbahs* and the walls, who had 2,500 Christian captives and 3,000 criminals to carry out his commands, a mere garden would be easy anywhere. Beneath a last gateway Ibrahim awaits me. I join him, and gaze at last upon the *Aguedal*. Oh, land of paradox ! If this be his garden, then Mouley Ismail must have needed all Morocco for his park. It is the very desolation of distance, an almost treeless prairie, rolling away in waves of flower-strewn grass to the inexorable walls that twist like a red serpent on the horizon. Not a human being in sight. The only signs of life are some horses moving lazily through the high grass. I had been told of herds of ostriches, but none are visible. Perhaps they are miles away in some other part of the 'garden.'

Melancholy broods over this *Aguedal*, its emptiness depresses

in spite of the breeze and the flowers. Yet there was a time when it was neither melancholy nor empty. Three buildings stand at intervals against the wall, breaking its grey monotony with their green-tiled roofs. Once they were imperial summer-houses, and even now the graceful colonnades, which seem to grow from the wild flowers beneath them, remain as charming as in the days when weeds had not covered the mosaic of their steps. Under Mouley Ismail, the *Aguedal* was the playground of his countless women, but the pavilions must have witnessed scenes of greater import than the diversions of the *hareem*. It may well have been from beneath these colonnades that the Sultan announced to the assembled architects and courtiers his will to build another monumental gateway or yet another line of ramparts, while from behind the wall came the cracking of whips and the cries of captives. Perhaps before these very steps a panting messenger prostrated himself to deliver the great tidings for which the aged ruler had waited so long, that the armies of the glorious Sultan Mouley Ismail had driven the infidels with great slaughter from Tangier. But most of all I like to imagine a procession moving slowly across the grass with the grave mien of those who have seen much and who know the world. Travellers these, returned from the distant land of France, to tell the master of Morocco of the glories of Versailles and of the great French king who also builds palaces. Among the flowers of the *Aguedal* is unfolded the tale of the splendours of the Court of France, of the great halls and gilded corridors, of the gardens with their canals and fountains, and of the lake created where no lake had been, to make the landscape perfect for the monarch whose title was 'The Sun.' The white-robed Sultan listens in silence, his emotion hidden beneath a sphinx-like exterior. At last he speaks. "These things are great indeed, but what the Franks can do I, Mouley Ismail, can also do. Within this garden there shall be a lake,



MEQUINEZ : A RUINED PAVILION



MEQUINEZ : A PAVILION

like to the French king's in all things but one, that it shall be vaster." The lake exists to-day. It must be at least three hundred yards long, and about the same breadth, surrounded on three sides by immensely high walls, while on the fourth a great open space leads towards the palace. It is said that Mouley Ismaïl used it as a bathing-place for the ladies of his *hareem*. To-day a few negresses wash the clothes of other royal favourites in its clear water, their chatter mingling with the chorus of frogs among the reeds.

The summer afternoon is nearing its end, and the lines of high ramparts throw long, blue avenues of shadow, in which it is pleasant to ride back to Mequinez. Ibrahim has found a different way for our return, through gates and enclosures which I no longer try to count. At one place we enter a courtyard of Mouley Ismail's palace, an oblong place surrounded by the buildings and arcades that John Windus described, but now a sea of grass and flowers, with here and there a fig-tree growing close against the wall as if to seek support in its loneliness. A great hall, so dark that one can only guess its size, is at one end of the courtyard, and from it passages lead to yet other courts and arcades and dusty, bat-haunted chambers. Green roofs rise everywhere above the ochre-red walls, and uncouth storks, on the highest pinnacles, flap lazily against the sapphire sky before settling for the night. More than ever the spirit of the great Sultan seems to brood over the maze of ruins that was once his dwelling. Outside the abandoned courtyard, a wall—seemingly higher than any of the others—looms in the swiftly falling African dusk. A sudden turning, and light shows faintly through a vaulted arch. Bab Mansour once more, and beyond it lies the great esplanade where I stood and wondered hours ago, still awaiting my return from the past of ruins and memories to the present that only looks ahead.

Of the many episodes in Mouley Ismail's reign for which the

stately arch of Bab Mansour must have served as a background, one stands out with special clearness. The Sultan's love of grandeur was not confined to buildings alone, for at the zenith of his glory he conceived the idea of marrying no less a personage than the Princesse de Conti, daughter of Louis XIV and Louise de la Vallière. How his choice came to fall upon that particular lady we are not told, but certain it is that a letter was written demanding the hand of the princess, and an ambassador, Ben Aïssa by name, chosen to carry it to the Court of Versailles. Out of Bab Mansour passed the *cortège*, negro guards and eunuchs, musicians with strange instruments, slaves leading riderless horses, and last of all the Sultan, robed in pure white, beneath the imperial umbrella. Slowly he moved forward, surrounded by grave dignitaries, some with their hands upon his bridle, others holding his stirrups, while beside him, with appropriately humble mien, walked Ben Aïssa.

One is not surprised to hear of the failure of the mission, which probably caused no little merriment among the French courtiers. But though Louis XIV refused to entertain the proposal, he gilded the pill by sending the Baron de St. Amand to carry his reply to Morocco. There can be no doubt, however, that the Sultan's pride was sorely wounded, and as in these cases unsuccessful ambassadors generally had to suffer, it is significant that no further mention is made of Ben Aïssa. Imagination must fill the gap, and we can picture his return, a jaded figure in the midst of a group of frightened servants, plodding between lines of silent horsemen towards the shadow of the gateway. Perhaps there are jests from the rabble of Mequinez, but it is best not to speculate. The chronicles are dumb concerning Ben Aïssa's fate, so one can only hope that it was a happy one.

I was about to turn away from Bab Mansour when something

caught my eye, moving in the twilight above the ribbon of black lettering that still glittered against its yellow background. A lizard, very big and very green—a strange lizard to be out at such an hour—was making its way slowly and knowingly along the flat surface above the archway. Every now and then it paused and looked down with its head on one side, as if pondering over the words beneath it that said, 'Built to the glory of God and of Mohammed His Prophet, by the glorious Sultan Mouley Ismaïl (may he be exalted among the blessed) the eminent, brave among the brave, sage and modest, redoubtable for his enemies, humble before Allah.' And having come to the end of the inscription, the lizard disappeared through a hole in the flower-crowned battlements.

CHAPTER XI

THE PIRATES' NEST

THE Pirates' nest ! There is something vivifying in the words, a gaiety of salt air and rolling breakers and adventure. There will be history of course down there on the Atlantic coast, and ruins of the wonderful Moroccan past ; but one feels that even the ancient things will be different. With the dwindling minarets of Mequinez comes relief from the oppression of its greatness and emptiness. Not only Mequinez, but, away beyond the eastern horizon, Fez, the dark city of djinns and magic, is waning in power. At last one can look back with pleasure upon things which at close quarters were almost too strange to be understood. Mosques and medersas, shrines and clocks and magicians, begin to stand out with the grace of miniatures. Even the towering walls seem a fitting background, now that distance has robbed them of their gloom.

The road to the coast curves back and forward across ravines and along little valleys, leading ever downwards among the rocks and dwarf palms. Now and then an opening reveals the plain that marks the western edge of Africa, spread out in the haze below ; but such views are rare, and the drop of 1,400 feet from Mequinez to Rabat has nothing spectacular to offer. After the hills the country undergoes a change. The soil is deeper and richer, forming a sort of steppe, where black-tented nomads grow crops and breed stock

as their uncertain spirit of labour moves them. It is like a bit of Russia, but this steppe has no time to grow monotonous, for soon its place is taken by a forest extending for over thirty miles, almost to the coast. Forests in this part of Morocco are rare, and their rarity makes them doubly attractive. One has to have travelled for days through treeless lands in order to appreciate, not a simple oasis that comes and is gone like the mirages around it, but the lasting shade and coolness of mile upon mile of woodland. That is why the cork-forest of Mamoura counts as a beauty spot through which travellers are recommended to pass, especially in springtime, when its glades have a special loveliness and its open spaces are covered with wild flowers.

In the past the reputation of Mamoura was a very evil one. The fiercest brigands infested the tracks passing along its edges, and none but the most adventurous travellers would have dared to penetrate its depths. But in time this unfortunate state of affairs brought the only natural sequel in a land of paradox, namely, the arrival of holy men and wonder-workers to counteract the evil of the forest, and to prove that worldly gain was after all but a poor affair compared with the power of religion. In this respect Mamoura differed not at all from its European neighbours. What self-respecting forest of our Middle Ages but boasted of its hermit as well as its ogre, its good fairy as well as its dragon? Now, among the saints who came to Mamoura was a woman, and naturally the legend that has come down to us is careful to prove her vast superiority over her male colleagues. It happened that a friendly contest in miracle-working between two of the holy men not only became somewhat heated, but threatened to cause irreparable calamity. After performing several minor marvels, one sage had thought to close the proceedings by dipping his hand into the sea and withdrawing it covered with fishes, each hair having been miraculously turned into a hook.

His rival thought for a moment, then beckoned to the waves and started to walk inland followed by the whole ocean. "By Allah! What would you do?" cried the first miracle-worker. "Behold," replied the other, "I take the waves with me, that the beautiful maidens of Fez may wash their hands in them. Come, if you would not drown." Soon they were met by the holy woman, who upbraided them for their folly and bade the leader of the ocean desist from his purpose. "How can I desist?" he protested, "I have sworn that the maidens of Fez shall wash their hands in this water, and my oath is sacred." "Fool," cried the woman, "who but a man could be so stupid!" And with a wave of her wand, all the beautiful maidens were transported from Fez, and washed their hands in the ocean, which then retired to its former position.

Along the northern border of the forest flows the river Sebou, with the town of Knitra on its bank. Twelve years ago Knitra was nothing but a group of mud huts and black, nomad tents. To-day it bids fair to become the centre of an important agricultural district. At one moment a still more brilliant destiny seemed possible, for when the site for a future commercial port was being chosen, Knitra, as opposed to Casablanca, had many partisans. It is only six miles from the sea, on a river which is navigable for vessels of moderate draught, and could have been made so for large tonnage with no greater outlay than has been expended on Casablanca. As likely as not a steamer lies at the quay, looking strangely big and modern between the plain and the forest. At the sight one's thoughts fly inland to the imperial motor-boat rotting in its tank up there in Fez. It, too, once made a triumphal journey up this very river, to the fear and wonder of all beholders. That was yesterday. To-day, what men of Knitra would be impressed by a simple motor-boat? Things move apace on the Atlantic coast.

A little beyond Knitra the last groups of trees give way to stretches

of waste land. The minarets of 'Sallee the White,' and the fort-crowned promontory of its twin sister, Rabat, appear in the distance, with between them a line of breakers marking the bar of the Bou Regreg. Light and air and breaking surf—it is the end of Africa.

Sallee appears in the early records as Sla, a dependency of Shella, whose ruins stand on the opposite bank of the river, but a settlement already existed in the days of Okba, the first Moslem conqueror to reach the Atlantic coast. He it was who rode his horse into the sea with the cry, "Lord, did these waves not prevent me, I would go to the uttermost ends of the earth to combat for thy religion." It is evident that in Okba's time there were not yet miracle-workers in the forest of Mamoura, or the difficulty of the ocean would have been easily overcome. A variant of the story is that Okba cried out, "And greeting unto you, O people." "To whom do you give greeting?" asked his companions. "To the people of Jonas," replied Okba. "They welcomed me, and I returned their salutation. If it were not for the waves I would show you this people." The reference to the Old Testament would be surprising but for the fact that not only were Moslems generally conversant with Jewish history, but the Berbers themselves are said to have originated in Palestine, being descended from no less a personage than the giant Goliath. After their king had been killed by David they emigrated to the west and continued their nomad existence, leaving the towns and villages to other tribes. Such is the tradition—picturesque, as they all are, and no less credible than most. I have no serious confirmation of it, but the curious fact remains that even to-day the Berbers of the Atlantic coast make sacrifices to the divinities of the ocean.

In 1132 the Almohade Emir, Abd El Moumen, took possession of Sallee, and a hundred years later the first Merinide, Yakoub El

Mansour, marked an epoch in its history by building a bridge across the river to connect it with Rabat. No traces remain of this bridge, but unless the size of the Bou Regreg has dwindled considerably, it must have been an important engineering feat. It formed a much needed connecting link, and for several centuries enabled the two towns to run, so to speak, in double harness. In the early Middle Ages Sallee had become the most important commercial port on the Atlantic coast of Morocco, and the tolerance of Islam towards unbelievers being at that time very great, many traders and merchants from the principal European countries visited the town, and some actually took up their residence there. It soon grew into an international market, where native skins, wool, wax, and honey were exchanged for the merchandise of Genoa and Venice, and where Flemish and English rubbed shoulders with Spaniards and Portuguese. For a time all went well, but such prosperity was bound to arouse the avidity of the rulers of the land, and in the thirteenth century a period of strife set in which only ended three hundred years later with the complete ruin of the famous pirates' nest.

Now the independence and tranquillity of Sallee in those early days are proved by the fact that it possessed no fortifications. In consequence, the Spaniards were able to enter and sack the town in 1260, carrying away an immense booty. This invasion made defence imperative, but it was only in 1335 that the Sultan Abou El Hassan Ali, the unfortunate father of our friend Abou Inan Farés, began to build, not only the necessary walls, but gateways, mosques and aqueducts, that were beautiful as well as useful. Abou El Hassan Ali was gifted to the fullest extent with the artistic sense and judgment distinctive of his race, so it is hardly necessary to add that his *pièce de résistance* took the form of a medersa. A Merinide town without one would be unthinkable. It stands close to the great mosque, with the usual carved-stone, canopied gateway reached by

several steps from the street. If the traveller comes from Fez, a very legitimate fear of anticlimax after the marvels of the capital is likely to predominate at the sight of yet another medersa, but fortunately such fear is not justified. The courtyard cannot pretend to the glories of El Attarin or El Bouananiya. It is very small, only about twenty-four feet by eighteen, but the remnants of its decoration are not wanting in personality, and the sensation of tranquil aloofness is as strongly present as in its more famous brethren. At Sallee the central fountain, that most important feature of all medersas, takes the form of a simple jet without adornment of any kind. It looks as if something more ornate must once have filled its place, such simplicity being hardly in keeping with Merinide standards, but I could find no evidence to support the idea. Two points of interest the medersa of Sallee does possess. One is the stalactite, cedarwood carving over the entrance to the chapel—a particularly simple and graceful design—the other the inlaid cylindrical pillars of the courtyard. They are decorated with unsightly mosaic patterns, arranged in cubes and lozenges. Apart from the design, the pillars themselves are out of harmony with their surroundings, and closer inspection only serves to increase the impression. The thick shafts fall from the broadest part of the stone capitals, and end without any sign of a plinth at their base. Can this be Merinide work, and if not, whose is it? As a matter of fact, I think we may exonerate the Merinide builders from such a lapse from good taste. Two explanations appear possible. One is that slender marble columns, like those of El Attarin and the Karouiyin fountain pavilions at Fez, originally surrounded the courtyard, and that, in view of the excessive weight of the superstructure, they were strengthened by the addition of cylinders of cement. It will be remembered that the square supports of Attarin are probably due to the same miscalculation on the part of the builders. The other—in my opinion the more probable, and

certainly the more Moroccan explanation—is that when the medersa was already falling into disuse, some high official of the *Habous** removed the marble columns for his own profit, replacing them by stone and mosaic. In that case the ugliness of the substitute is not surprising. It prevented the medersa from falling, and that was all that mattered.

Sallee reached the height of its prosperity during the seventeenth century, when it fell into the hands of an Emir who not only extended his power as far as Fez, but also captured the rival town of Rabat. As the headquarters of pirates whose daring surpassed even that of the Algerian corsairs, it became unpleasantly famous in more than one European country, and its name must have struck terror in the heart of many an embarking passenger. What a time of adventure that must have been ! At first the English and Flemish were supposed to be exempt from the attentions of the pirate galleys, and their merchants continued to trade peacefully with the pirates ; but soon this ideal state of affairs came to an end, and all ships, irrespective of nationality, became fair quarry. Attacks were by no means limited to the trade routes along the Barbary coast, for the redoubtable rovers even raided the ports of Cornwall, and on several occasions brought merchantmen plying between England and New York in triumph to Sallee, where they lay during the protracted negotiations that followed. Even when the ships were released the cargoes and passengers often remained in the hands of the Moors, the former probably for good and all, the latter against ransom of a very pretentious nature. Under Mouley Ismaïl it became necessary to send special envoys to the Moroccan Court with the demands and protests of the British Government. I have hinted elsewhere at the difficulties attending these missions, which generally obtained nothing more than a polite and evasive reply after months of waiting

* Department of Ecclesiastical Property.

amid the studied insults of the Moors. Such a state of things could not be suffered indefinitely, and during the seventeenth century both France and England sent men of war to reason with the inhabitants of Sallee and Rabat. It was a step in the right direction, but the expeditions do not seem to have had much effect, and in the end Moroccan piracy received its death blow from within and not from without. During over a century of lawlessness the twin cities had been quite independent of Fez and Mequinez. Sultans had eyed with growing jealousy the prosperity of the pirates' nest. To a man like Mouley Ismail this independence was an insult, and he put an end to it with the same energy that characterised all his undertakings. How could he tolerate what was practically a republic within the imperial dominions, when every other coast town was in his hands, and even the English had been forced to abandon Tangier ? Mouley Ismail's method was typical. He dispatched an important force of his negro troops to the coast, and Rabat, knowing their reputation for lawlessness, lost no time in making its submission. A few years later the last shreds of independence disappeared from Sallee also, and with liberty, both opulence and daring rapidly declined. From time to time attempts were made to revive the glories of other days, but the spirit of the rovers was gone. The attitude of European countries too had changed, and they no longer submitted tamely to the capture of their merchantmen. Reprisals in the shape of blockade and bombardment followed each aggression, and with the appearance in their midst of foreign consuls, the pirate cities sank into an oblivion which only ended in 1913. Even now one is inclined to ignore Sallee. The brilliant destiny of Rabat has eclipsed the peaceful little town among the yellow sands on the other side of the Bou Regreg. Yet Sallee has an attractiveness of its own, all the more delightful because not too apparent. It is a summary in miniature of things Moroccan—ramparts, *souks*, a medersa, and even a *mellah*—without

the fatigue of the stupendous, and with the added charm of breaking waves at its gates.

Across the river, the *Kasbah* of the Oudaia rears its verdure-covered cliffs and deep red battlements. From this side Rabat is quite the most striking town of the Atlantic coast, and I will even venture to assert that it is the most interesting. To find its past one has only to look at the walled groves of Shella, the tower of Hassan, the terraced *Kasbah* on its sea-girt rock. The present needs no interpreter, for the modern avenues sloping gently upwards behind the old town tell their own tale. As to the future, anyone who knew Rabat twelve years ago will agree that what has been done since then is only the first step in a great career. I was told that I ought to have written first about Rabat and Casablanca, because, after Fez, Mequinez, and Marrakesh, the coast towns would appear too modern to be interesting. If that opinion is correct, then my judgment has been sadly at fault. I admit that the hall of the Hôtel de la Tour Hassan does not exactly err on the side of antiquarian interest, but one has only to take a glance outside to be confronted by the glorious relic of the past from which it takes its name. Modern coast towns indeed ! Roll back the years—a good eight hundred of them—and we are at the beginning of Rabat among the empty waste lands.

About the middle of the twelfth century the Almohade Sultan Abd El Moumen Ali founded the Ribat El Fath, or Citadel of Victory, otherwise known as the *Kasbah* of the Oudaia. The fortress was intended to commemorate Moslem victories over the Christians in Andalusia, and to serve as a base for stores and troops destined for Spain. It took over fifty years to complete, and in all probability the traveller who to-day stands within the high, battlemented walls sees it very much as it appeared in the brilliant days of its youth.

In form the *Kasbah* resembled the numerous Moslem fortresses built in Spain during the Middle Ages. Behind its walls a whole

village found shelter from attack, and besides a central dungeon it possessed a mosque, a house for the governor, and buildings for the garrison. The first troops to be stationed there—if one may use the expression—belonged to the Oudaia tribe, and the place has been known by their name ever since. All the original buildings have disappeared, but the monumental gateway leading to the enclosure remains. The importance attached to gateways by the Moors is apparent to everyone, but to the close observer their success in giving individuality to each separate work must always be a source of wonder. It is not only that their choice of site never seems to be at fault, but behind site and decoration lies the uncanny gift of crushing the beholder beneath the dignity of the monument. Is there something magical lurking in the Moorish arch? I may be alone in my opinion, but never has the most impressive gateway of another style of architecture exercised a like fascination. The customary bayonet entrance with its double turn may be responsible to a certain extent for this sensation, but there is something more than that, and I can only leave it to others to bear me out or to condemn me as a dreamer. Arabesques of rather subdued sculpture decorate the ochre-red gateway of the *Kasbah* of the Oudaia, and a deep-cut inscription in Cufic lettering frames it with words of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord of Battles and the Giver of Victories, words often shouted from a thousand throats as the victorious Moorish troops poured in procession through the arch. For some reason which I could not ascertain the gateway was built up when the power of Rabat came to an end, and remained in that condition till 1915, when it was reopened by M. Tranchant de Lunel. But the gateway is not the only restoration the *Kasbah* owes to that indefatigable Director of Fine Arts. There is still better close beside it.

We have seen in other Moroccan towns that among the Moors

the love of learning was as strong as the love of war, and therefore it is not surprising to find a medersa forming part of the citadel. Though it has long been in disuse, there is much still remaining to indicate its original purpose, and the patio now shelters a museum enjoying the rare advantage of an artistic setting. The necessary changes have been made with a sparing hand. Preservation, and not restoration, was the watchword, and the result is admirable. Many things of interest fill the little rooms, but the medersa can boast of something more than a museum. It has a garden, a beauty spot created where all had been allowed to fall to ruin. No fantasy has shared in the planning of this garden, and its quaint formality is its greatest charm. The high, red, crenellated walls surround it as if guarding a treasure in their bosom, and storks look down upon its loveliness in wonder, but without envy. "Why trouble about a garden when there are towers from which to view the world?" they seem to ask. Well, let the storks criticise. The garden does not care. Orange trees and oleanders stand among its rose-covered pergolas and rose-filled beds, and wide borders of rosemary make a scented barrier to protect them. Jasmine runs riot on the columns of the pergolas, and the ochre walls blaze with the pink of wild geraniums, whose daring has even reached to the storks' nests on the battlements. In a corner an ancient water-wheel creaks out a chant of other days as the earthen pitchers empty their contents to give life to the garden. Three notes repeat themselves unceasingly in the creaking. "I knew the Almohades," they murmur. "In their time the garden was beautiful, but not so beautiful as the infidels have made it. Alas! Alas!" Moorish women come to the garden on a day set apart for them, and wander like happy souls in the Elysian fields. Nothing could be stranger than these groups of veiled figures among the flowers, In the sunlight they look like processions of belated ghosts, and it needs the chatter of an invisible

mouth or the sparkle of an eye through the tiny opening in the folds of the *haik* to convince one of their reality.

Hither and thither move the shapeless white bundles, meeting and parting amid laughter and gossip, and forming ever-changing pictures to which no photograph could do justice. As luck would have it the djinns had taken possession of my camera on the morning I spent with the ladies of Rabat, and in consequence most of my efforts to use it ended in failure. Perhaps it was because I had no business there at all, or perhaps an Evil Eye laughed at me from behind yards of veiling. Anyhow my pictures were bewitched, and we know that the ladies are adepts in the art of magic.

Towards the river, a little arched doorway in the high, red wall leads to a group of one-roomed houses clinging to the hillside among fig-trees and cactus, and in front of them an open terrace looks down into the green water of the river's mouth, and across to the yellow sands of Sallee. A Moorish café has found a place on the terrace, with settees in the shade of the vines, and little green tables for the glasses of mint-scented tea. It is a place of tranquil beauty, for the ladies have gone, and the only sound is the soft thud of breakers on the river bar. As a promenade for the townsfolk the terrace has proved a great success, for not only does it offer the delights of a garden and a view, but it possesses that contemplative atmosphere so dear to the Moorish heart. Before leaving the medersa and its garden, there is a phase in its existence I had almost forgotten to mention, I mean the time when it served as a school of navigation for the pirates of Rabat and Sallee. Until the first years of the seventeenth century no buildings existed outside the *Kasbah* of the Oudaia. In 1608 the Saadian Sultan Zidan founded a settlement on the site of the present town, with several thousands of Moorish exiles from Andalusia, descendants of the warriors who went forth from the *Kasbah* to conquer Spain nearly five hundred years before. The

refugees had acquired an advanced civilisation and a great knowledge of nautical matters, and they lost no time in founding a school of pilotage to aid the unlawful schemes of their brethren. It was a necessary education, for the pirates, brave though they were, knew very little of navigation. The school was natural enough, but it is surprising to find the medersa—a sacred building, containing if not a mosque at least a chapel—serving for such a purpose. Any means to an end, was the pirates' motto, and that a medersa was the means, and the capture of a Christian ship the end, made no difference.

The building of the *Kasbah* of the Oudaia was completed towards the end of the twelfth century by that most magnificent of Almohade Sultans, Yakoub El Mansour, and to him Rabat also owed its Great Mosque and the minaret known to-day as the Tower of Hassan. It was an age of towers, for when the architect Djeber, a Moslem of Seville, began his work, the Koutoubia at Marrakesh and the Giralda at Seville were also building. I believe that the latter was the first to be completed, so it is probable that Djeber drew inspiration from his native town. The Tower of Hassan shares that power of attraction common to all towers, and especially to ruined towers. It dominates Rabat as the Koutoubia dominates Marrakesh. The fact that its top storey was never finished may account for a French writer remarking that 'it amazes the traveller not because of its proportions, which have a rather heavy appearance, but because of its size, its solidity, and the beauty of its grand and simple decoration. The tower is a symbol of that Almohade dynasty which left its work of social organisation unfinished, but whose glory has nevertheless remained ineffaceable.' The mosque at the foot of the tower must have been a splendid building. From the excavations made by M. Dieulafoy, it appears to have consisted of an immense rectangle, 600 feet by 350, with no less than three courtyards, entered through



RABAT : THE TOWER OF HASSAN

twelve gates. The roof of the hall of prayer, or liwan, was supported on its southern side by forty columns of white marble twenty feet high, and by a hundred and seventy of half that height in its other parts. At the death of Yakoub El Mansour, neither the mosque nor the tower had been completed, and they were opened for worship in an unfinished state. After suffering serious damage by fire in the fourteenth century, the mosque is supposed to have been completely destroyed by the great Lisbon earthquake in 1755. A shock of such magnitude would doubtless be felt on the coast of Morocco, but nature is too often saddled with the delinquencies of man, and in my opinion much of the shaking that brought down the forest of columns was done by human agency. Damage by fire to the mosque reminds me of the amusing story of a man who used to dip his cloak in spirits of wine and set fire to it in the mosque without suffering ill effects. This feat so astonished the beholders that the man soon came to be looked upon as a saint, and was sent for to Court, where he grew great and wealthy. Now the saint had learned the trick from a Jew, who also provided the spirits of wine, and whom he naturally refused to pay. Entreaties were vain, but in the end the Jew got even with his debtor. He told the secret to the Emperor, who put His Holiness to the test of a more substantial fire, which consumed not only his mantle, but his sacred person as well.

An inclined plane leads up the interior of the tower, and one day I made the ascent and gazed upon the world from the top of a minaret, a coign of vantage that had always seemed unattainable. Many a time I had envied the mueddins of Cairo and Constantinople their inspiring outlook, and longed to join them on their giddy balconies. Mouley Idris and Marrakesh had only increased the longing, and now my desire was fulfilled and I was standing on the unfinished terrace of the Tower of Hassan. I tried to picture it seven hundred years ago, when priests dozed in its cool shadow till the sundial

pointed to the hour of prayer, or listened to the drip of the water-clock in one of its windowless rooms. That past is distant, but its spirit lingers still.

Height is inspiring, and I believe that residence in a lofty tower would prove a cure for many of our ills, both physical and social. Long ago, sages and magicians always lived at the top of endless stairs, and princesses were invariably shut up at a sufficient height from the ground to exercise an elevating influence upon their lovers, and make both hair and girdle serve a useful purpose. Neither princesses nor magicians inhabit the Tower of Hassan, but the view from its terrace tries to compensate for their absence. Northwards stretches a vague coast-line. The river cuts the picture in half, with the high-perched *Kasbah* of the Oudaia facing Sallee across the wind-flecked water. Rabat clusters beside the *Kasbah* and at one's feet lie the broken pillars of the mosque that was once so glorious. Inland the walls of Shella are just visible, with a minaret peeping from among the foliage, an impression of grey and yellow, ending in the dark line of forest on the horizon. That is the past. But in this view it is the present that holds the centre of the stage and gives most furiously to think. It has surrounded old Rabat, pressing it closely at every point left undefended by nature. Streets and avenues have sprung up along the ocean. Villas and palaces, barracks and government offices, dot the landscape. The new is taking its place beside the old, and the experiment bids fair to be a notable success in town-planning and architectural adaptability.

In Oriental countries the task of the European architect is always an arduous one. Besides the difficulty of suiting his buildings to their purpose and also to the climate, he is handicapped by custom and the very natural desire for a resemblance to things left at home. In the case of a government architect the difficulties are still greater, for red tape and dislike of innovation have proved to be almost

unconquerable. Of military builders it is useless to speak. Why barracks and cantonments—in any and every country—should necessarily be ugly buildings, is a question I cannot answer. But that they are ugly there is no doubt. Any architect who is more than a machine, any sightseer with a sense of observation, anybody in fact except the most soulless bureaucrat, must feel that, in the East and in the tropics, public buildings erected by Europeans are generally of regrettable appearance. Private houses and bungalows follow in the footsteps of their more important neighbours, and when there is money to burn, size and ugliness increase at the same rate. European architecture in Egypt is clearly illustrated by a tram ride from Alexandria to San Stephano, and perhaps those who have gazed upon the public buildings of India will grasp my meaning. Had the pseudo-Taj-Mahal-like building at Wembley been replaced by a replica of the railway station at Bombay, the imperial lesson would have been less agreeable but perhaps more architecturally useful.

Now the French brought to Morocco all the above prejudices. Their ideas of colonial architecture were no better than they should be. They were worse than ours, because a Louis XV château is even less suited to the jungle than a Victorian villa residence, and because the French insisted upon making the inside of their houses uncomfortable as well as the outside. In Casablanca one sees much of a particularly unfortunate type. Streets with no more character than the Rue Bab Azoun at Algiers, or the Avenue de France at Tunis, were hastily erected by the first arrivals. Faithful copies of Marseilles apartment-houses sprang up in a country which might have been spared such things for all time. But these mistakes served a good purpose. They were the awful examples necessary to prevent further damage, and for that reason we may look upon them kindly. From the beginning a few determined spirits recognised that the

old types need not be copied eternally, and that European buildings might be made pleasing to the eye and appropriate to the climate without losing their usefulness. Fortunately for Morocco, Marshal Lyautey was among the revolutionaries, and to him and to his Director of Fine Arts is due what Sir Martin Conway has aptly termed Franco-Moorish architecture. Rabat is lucky. It has profited by the mistakes of Casablanca. It is like a modern stained-glass window in an ancient cathedral. The glass is good and the colours will soon blend with their surroundings, but when I first knew it the choice between artistic novelty and the classic horrors of untravelled architects still hung in the balance. The struggle that ensued reminded me of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*. Here, too, were Walther and Beckmesser, represented by the new and old architects ; Hans Sachs, by the sound judgment of the Resident General ; and a charming Eva, in the shape of the future style of building. In the opera, we know beforehand that Walther will marry Eva, but the Moroccan version was not so sure of a happy ending. Only too often the comedy threatened to turn to tragedy, and had Beckmesser won the day, the hideous outskirts of Lyons and Marseilles would have been the fate of Rabat instead of Franco-Moorish architecture.

That such terrible things did not happen is at once apparent in the French quarters built beside all Moroccan cities, but especially at Rabat. There the new style has been triumphant and, as might be expected in such conditions, the small buildings are even more remarkable than the great. The magnificent new Residency, for instance, forces admiration on account of its successful exhibition of every Moroccan craft. Marble, mosaic, stucco, carved cedarwood, have all played their typical part in the decoration of its halls and courtyards. But though the *ensemble* is imposing it leaves one cold. As a setting for official receptions it has been planned with taste

and admirably carried out, but it cannot rank as a masterpiece. One seeks in vain the dignity of the Bahia at Marrakesh or the grace of Bou Jeloud at Fez. On the other hand, the government offices and other houses grouped round the main building are delightfully conceived and in every respect suitable to the country, and the same may be said of most of the villas dotting the plain. In them differences of detail and form, within the definite limits of the adopted style, have not only been permitted, but encouraged. Variety is everywhere, and the elements employed are those familiar to the traveller in Morocco. Pillared arcades surround the courtyards or form porches in front of the houses. Mosaic lines the lower walls. Stucco panels of traditional design find a place in many of the rooms. The larger entrance archways are framed with coloured tiles, and—most striking feature of all—the pent-roofs of ancient gateways have served as models for the decoration of upper windows. Here is a triumph for the monuments of old Morocco that their builders never dreamed of. Almohades, Merinides, and Saadians have taught the twentieth century to use, and not to flout their crumbling beauty, and the lesson has been well learnt. So, when one looks down from the Tower of Hassan at the new city growing up beside it, there is not the sense of desecration generally associated with modern buildings in an Eastern land. Franco-Moorish style is an invention upon which both Morocco and France may be congratulated.

Beyond the Tower of Hassan, beyond the infant avenues and the buildings of yesterday, beyond the Residency and the ancient ramparts, lie the ruins of Shella, a settlement that flourished long before Sallee or Rabat were thought of. The place is supposed to have been of Phoenician origin, and was certainly a Roman colony. It passed through the hands of various conquerors—including the great Mouley Idris—till the Almoravids transferred their affections

to Sallee in 1154. For a time Shella was abandoned, but not for long. In the fourteenth century its sheltered ground, sloping gently towards the marshes of the river, its trees and verdure, and its springs of limpid water, did not fail to attract the attention of those lovers of the beautiful, the Merinide Sultans. With their unerring judgment they chose the site as a royal burying-ground, and the ruins date from their day. Within the walls are the crumbling remnants of a mosque, whose minaret still rises triumphant from the tangle of wild creepers at its feet. It is a very beautiful minaret, gay with delicately coloured tiles, and on its chimney-like cupola lives the inevitable family of storks. How long *do* storks live, I wonder? Merinide storks would be wonderfully attractive. Were I to question Ibrahim, he would no doubt insist that there are still some in existence, but many days in Morocco have taught me to avoid questions of age, even the age of storks, and I hold my counsel. In the mosque are the remains of a curious *mihrab*, surrounded by a semicircular passage. According to tradition, the Prophet Mohammed once prayed there, and for a long time afterwards it was only necessary to walk seven times round the *mihrab* in order to gain the title of *Hadj*, given to those having made the pilgrimage to Mecca. When the holy influence ceased to act I do not know, but gone it is, and to-day no amount of circling will produce the right to a green turban. At the lowest point of the enclosure is a spring, now used to supply Rabat with water. Near it stands a *koubba* of deep-red stone, soberly carved beneath its stalactite pent-roof, the only royal mausoleum at Shella. The *koubba* shelters the tombs of the Merinide Sultan Abou El Hassan Ali and his wife. No need for them to envy the gaunt ruins of others of their race on the flank of Zalagh, overlooking Fez, for here nature has made a far more lovely resting-place. Something of Abou El Hassan Ali, and his defeat and disaster at the hands of his son Abou Inan, has been told in



SHELLA : THE MINARET

these pages. His unhappy life ended in exile from his capital, but one great joy has remained with him among the roses and clematis of Shella. Beside the Sultan's tombstone is another, smaller, marble slab, that of Shems Ed Douha, 'The Sunshine of the Morn,' lovely name of a lovely woman. Her romance contains no tragedy. It is simply an epic of devotion. A Christian slave in the household of the Sultan, she renounced her faith in order to become his wife, and after nearly six centuries her body still lies in the place of honour.

In the early morning a few water-sellers fill their goat-skins at the fountain. Sometimes pilgrims sit by the *koubbas* of holy men on the hillside, or hurrying tourists wander for a moment among the ruins ; but as a rule Shella is very tranquil, and the lovers in the royal tomb have it all to themselves. Not long ago I heard the only music that could break that stillness and yet convey its meaning, the sensation of moving on and on eternally, of hovering without beginning and without ending. It was the second movement of Brahms' quartette in G minor. It will never be played in the glades of Shella, but if it were, Abou El Hassan Ali and Sunshine of the Morn would surely understand—and forgive.

CHAPTER XII

ENVOI

MY last day in Morocco had come, and like most last days, it was filled with aimless wanderings that only served to make its emptiness more apparent. Which particular spot should receive the visit of adieu ? To-morrow night they would all be out of reach, and I would be passing up the coast, perhaps within sight of the lights of Rabat, but separated from them by the realm of that invisible people of Jonas who greeted Sidi Okba long ago. Already the familiar pageant of Moroccan life seemed to be growing dim, flowing past me like a dream in which I had no part. Can any European have a part in it ? How often had I heard the question asked, only to be answered by an emphatic negative ? It may be that those who have dug deepest, who have probed most carefully beneath the surface, imagine that they possess a glimmer of comprehension. But even with them the light does not last. Something always happens to upset their theories and prove their ignorance. Disillusion is inevitable, and in the restlessness of the last day it is apt to come with brutal candour.

I know that with me it was so. Viewed retrospectively, the varied experiences of my Moroccan days and weeks and months seemed to have led to no real understanding. I had steeped myself in the atmosphere of mosques and medersas, of *Emirs* and *Caïds*, of students and saints and magicians ; I had tried to see things from the

people's point of view ; and yet a barrier—intangible but insuperable—stood between them and me. Let there be no doubt about the matter. In Morocco any attempt to understand is fascinating but hopeless. The towering walls of its cities may fill the traveller with awe, but diligent search will always reveal a gateway to their inner secrets. Not so the Moroccan mind. Against its passive strength we beat in vain, like pygmies at the foot of a wall that has no opening. So it is the fate of every traveller worthy of the name to depart unsatisfied, hungry after more knowledge ; and in recompense he carries away with him two treasures that are one, the hope of return and the spell of Morocco.

No wonder, then, that on my last afternoon there was more appeal in the calm solitude of Shella than in the animated *souks* of Rabat or Sallee. With the picture of Shella uppermost in my mind, return to Morocco would be certain some day. Silently I passed through the gateway. From the grove came the sound of music, merchants of Rabat no doubt, come to spend the cool of the evening and drink tea among the perfume of oranges. The Moslem custom of using the neighbourhood of a tomb as a meeting-place for tranquil enjoyment is a very human one. With them pleasure among the dead conveys no disrespect, and a cemetery is not necessarily a place of woe and weeping. As a burying-place Shella approaches the ideal, but as a city of the living it must have been wonderful. Carthaginians and Romans, Vandals and Byzantines, succeeded each other on its slopes, building and destroying as fortune smiled upon them. Jupiter and Venus, Wotan and the gods of Walhalla, had their temples by the Bou Regreg ; fire and water, sun and moon, their worshippers. Even the Christian faith took root at Shella, for we are told that somewhere within its walls the favourite disciple of Christ lies buried, a tradition probably meaning that a chapel to St. John once stood among the temples and shrines. The wealth of Shella

was fabulous. Its domes were covered with lead so brilliant that it shone like silver. Gold was so common that it served to make chains for the dogs. The days and nights passed in feasting and music, and luxury and laziness grew hand in hand, till at last the people forgot to till the fields by the river. But they remembered their riches, and when at last famine came, and with it the pangs of hunger, they ground rubies and emeralds to powder and died in a splendid agony of jewelled eating. I asked Ibrahim what he thought of the story. "No truth could be plainer," came the ready answer. Ibrahim is ever loyal to the traditions of his country. "But," he added, "the people of Shella did not eat all their jewels. Great quantities were buried beneath the city." I looked at the damp earth round the Merinide tomb, with a murmured "May it bring them enjoyment" to counteract the covetousness of that last glance. Not that Shella need fear for its treasures. We may look upon them, but they can never be ours. The grove will keep its secret.

The last day affected Ibrahim even more than it did me. To him my departure was simply a proof of his shortcomings as a guide. "What would you show me at the end of our journey?" I asked in a reassuring tone. "What last remembrance of the *Maghreb** shall I carry away to my own land?" Ibrahim did not hesitate. His trump card was ready. "Let us return to the town," he replied. "This evening the Sultan comes from Marrakesh. If Allah wills, we shall see him." The Sultan! What more fitting end could I desire for my Moroccan days? As we made our way past the buildings of the new Residency and the native cavalry barracks, I recalled former occasions on which I had seen His Shereefian Majesty. Most impressive had been a scene in which Europe had no part, a slowly moving pageant beneath towering ramparts, a cavalcade of riderless horses, a jumble of native soldiery, with vizirs and slaves

* Land of the West, the Sunset.

and waving scarves in a cloud of yellow dust. And in their midst had ridden a single white-robed figure, gloriously impressive, like some pagan god beneath the imperial umbrella—the master of them all.

Again the scene had been acted, but now Europe held the chief rôle, with the modern buildings of Rabat as a background, against which serried ranks of French troops presented arms while the imperial *cortège* passed by. What was it this time, round which slaves and court dignitaries and negro guards crowded so closely? In vain my eyes sought the white arab with its orange trappings and white-robed rider. A European carriage had taken its place, a brougham of antiquated form and rococo tendency—said to have been a present from Queen Victoria to Mouley Hassan—in which someone wrapped in voluminous white robes was vaguely visible. The brougham stopped, and the Sultan alighted and slowly mounted the steps leading to his gorgeous tent. From its silken depths he watched while the troops defiled in the sunlight. No tribal horsemen these, dashing in wild fantasia. Moroccan spahis and Senegalese tirailleurs moved with the assurance and precision of European training. French artillery and colonial infantry followed, as if to show the model from which the others were copied ; and at the head of them all, surrounded by a brilliant staff, rode the representative of France, the man who had made French Morocco—Lyautey.

I am glad to have seen that Review of the 14th July—the French National Fête—with Lyautey in command of African troops, in Africa. For the moment, the occupant of the imperial tent held but a minor place in the picture. Even the most loyal Moorish eyes were fascinated by the new order of things and its creator. Morocco owes a deep debt of gratitude to Marshal Lyautey. France has reason to be proud of him. He might well be known as Lyautey the African,

for, with the exception perhaps of Laperrine, no French soldier has steeped himself in the atmosphere of Africa, and understood its spirit as he has done. One anecdote will suffice. I cannot remember where I read it, but it is typical of the man. He was reviewing an African battalion whose commanding officer had paraded his men in full European marching order. Lyautey looked at them and said, "Too much weight on these men. No boots. Sandals. I want them African." The officer applied for a transfer—and got it ; but Lyautey got his troops 'African.'

With these memories passing through my mind, we reached the mosque of Es Sounna, where every week the Sultan goes in pomp to Friday prayers. Suddenly Ibrahim stopped, pointing a triumphant finger down the avenue that led to Rabat. In the distance something was moving towards us, an indistinct mass from which burst occasional flashes of light. Gradually it took the form of men and horses, and once more I watched the approach of the ruler of Morocco and realised as I had never done before that even here the change had come—the change that is inevitable, everywhere. Gone the led horses with their gay trappings. Gone the struggling crowd of soldiery. Gone the arab charger and the Victorian brougham. An escort of Moroccan cavalry, precise and workmanlike in their smart uniforms, trotted slowly along the road, their drawn swords glinting in the sunlight. And in their midst, with engines purring softly above the clatter of hooves, two open touring cars bore the Sultan and his suite towards the green-roofed palace. In the stillness that followed their passage I seemed to hear the rustle of a collapsing house of cards. Was this Morocco, the Morocco of medersas and magicians, in which I had passed so many strange days ? Which of the white-swathed figures was the Sultan, I wondered ? How could one tell, with neither umbrella nor brougham to distinguish him ? In the old days people used to kiss his stirrup. What could they kiss, now

that he rode in a motor-car ? It was certainly a beautiful car—Citroën probably—with graceful lines and enormous bonnet ; but what did it matter ? My dream was ended, my illusions gone, and Ibrahim—soulless Moor—had been the means of my undoing. The moment was one of railing, unjust, and I am glad to say, short-lived. From Ibrahim I had learned the true lesson of my Moroccan days. He was right to show me his Sultan, not as I had known him before, but as he is to-day ; and it was just that my parting thoughts in his country should be of its present rather than of its past.

And the future ? What of the future ? I hear the crowd calling upon ignorance to prophesy, as is only right in the land of paradox. The future of Morocco is in no way uncertain. Only the surface will change. To those who raise their eyebrows in surprise I would say this : as the horse has led to the brougham and the brougham to the motor-car, so the motor-car is now leading rapidly to the unknown marvels of the future. But, beneath the surface, the still waters of Islam will continue to flow as deeply and mysteriously as in the days of Idris. The French know this, and would not have it otherwise. Their method in Morocco—and it has been strikingly successful—is to move the surface without stirring the depths, to '*apprivoiser*,' or tame by kindness and mutual consent, and—most important of all—to learn, as well as to teach.

That is why the lover of the Moroccan past may take the march of Western progress with equanimity. No need for him to lament because the railway from Tangier to Fez is at last nearing completion. No need to weep because Casablanca has become a modern port, replete with every modern convenience, from docks to slaughterhouse, or because it has been indulging in a crisis of overbuilding. The beautiful things he seeks are still to be found, their charm unchanged, though the approach to them may no longer be as romantic as it once was.

I write these lines where there is nothing to remind me of Morocco. My many days are ended and many others have dawned, in cold and darkness and fog, with the roar of the great city that has neither medersas nor mosques, for their accompaniment. Yet, at moments, the noises around me are not the noises of London. Beneath the rumble of the traffic there sometimes comes a sound of rushing water, laughing and elusive, that takes me back to the narrow streets of Fez. And sometimes, very faintly, with that monotonous repetition that is at once their power and their charm, I seem to hear the words, Mouley Idris . . . Mouley Idris . . . Mouley Idris.

LIST OF THE MOROCCAN SOVEREIGNS MENTIONED IN THIS VOLUME, WITH THEIR DYNASTIES, AND THE PRINCIPAL MONUMENTS BUILT BY THEM

(Taken from the *Table of Moroccan Dynasties*, By
P. Ricard, Conservator of the Museum of Fez)

IDRISITES

Idris I. 788 (A.H. 172). Established at Oulili.

Idris II. 808 (A.H. 193). Foundation of Fez El Bali, northern capital.

ALMORAVIDS

Youssef Ben Tachfine. 1062 (A.H. 454). Foundation of Marrakesh, southern capital.

The Empire of Morocco reaches its greatest extent.

ALMOHADES

Abou Yakoub Youssef. 1163 (A.H. 558). Foundation of Rabat.
(The Ribat El Fath, or *Kasbah* of the Oudaia).

Abou Youssef Yakoub El Mansour. 1184 (A.H. 580). Tower of Hassan at Rabat. Mosque and minaret of the Koutoubia at Marrakesh, and the Giralda at Seville.

MERINIDES

Abou Youssef Yakoub El Mansour. 1258 (A.H. 657). Foundation of Fez Djedid. Built the medersa Es Seffarin at Fez.

Abou Saïd Otman. 1321 (A.H. 721). Built the medersas El Attarin El Mesbahiya, and Es Sahridj at Fez.

MERINIDES—*contd.*

Abou El Hassan Ali. 1331 (A.H. 732). Built the medersa at Sallee.
 Abou Inan Farés. 1349 (A.H. 750). Built the medersa Bouananiya,
 and the clock belonging to it, at Fez.

SAADIANS

Abou El Mansour Ed Dehbi. 1588 (A.H. 997). Built the Badiya
 palace at Marrakesh.

Abd El Malek } Last Sultans of the dynasty. { 1618 (A.H. 1081).
 El'Oualid } 1634 (A.H. 1044).
 Ahmed El Abbas. 1654 (A.H. 1065). Reigned only over Marrakesh.

ALAOUITS

Mouley Er Rachid. 1670 (A.H. 1080). Built the medersa Es
 Cheratin, at Fez.

Mouley Ismaïl. 1672 (A.H. 1082). Construction of various palaces
 and fortifications at Mequinez. Reconstruction of the *Zaouia*
 of Mouley Idris Zerhoun. Destruction of the Badiya palace
 at Marrakesh. Evacuation of Tangier by the English.

Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdullah. 1757 (A.H. 1171). Construction
 of the medersa Bab El Gisa at Fez.

Mouley Suleiman. 1792 (A.H. 1206). Construction of the medersa
 El Oued at Fez.

Mouley Abd Er Rahman. 1822 (A.H. 1238). Last restoration of
 the *Zaouia* of Mouley Idris at Fez.

Mouley El Hassan. 1876 (A.H. 1293).

Abd El Aziz. 1895 (A.H. 1313). Construction of the Bahia palace
 at Marrakesh by Ba Achmed.

Mouley Youssef. 1913 (A.H. 1331). Present Sultan of Morocco.

